report

DATAFEST AFRICA 24
Nairobi, Kenya

Opportunities for all:

Harnessing Data and Technology for Africa's Transformation

17th -19th July, 2024 | Nairobi, Kenya

POLLICY

Contents

List of Abbreviations

AI - Artificial Intelligence

AMWIK - Association for Media Women in Kenya

BPO - Business Process Outsourcing

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

CoP - Communities of Practice

CSO - Civil Society Organisation

DCL - Digital Commons Lab

DRC - Democratic Republic of Congo

EHR - Electronic Health Record

FeCoMo - National Coalition on Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation

GBV - Gender-Based Violence

GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation

Gen Z - Generation Z

GIS - Geographic Information Systems

GSMC - Graduate School of Media and Communications

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

IREX - International Research & Exchanges Board

LDRI - Local Development Research Institute

LLMs - Large Language Models

MEDITECH - Medical Information Technology

MFA - Media Focus on Africa

PII - Personally Identifiable Information

SLMs - Small Language Models

SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound

TFGBV - Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

UMWA - Uganda Media Women's Association

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund

USSD - Unstructured Supplementary Service Data

UZIMA-DS (UtiliZe health Information for Meaningful impact in East Africa through Data Science)

Background

DataFest Africa by Pollicy is for the People. We are building a culture of responsible Data Use community by community and we will not leave Africans behind.

DataFest Africa is an annual event that brings together a community of data enthusiasts, artists, philanthropy, professionals, innovators to ultimately celebrate the use of data and its ever-evolving impact on the African continent. Since its inception in 2019, the conference has become a melting pot of some of Africa's Data Ecosystem Leaders and Contributors bringing together stakeholders of diverse backgrounds including government, civil society, academics, students and private industry experts to connect, learn, and collaborate on innovative data-driven solutions.

Under the theme **"Opportunities for all: Harnessing Data and Technology for Africa's Transformation,"** DataFest Africa 2024 attracted an attendance of close to 1,000 participants both

1. Addressing societal issues through data visualisation and highlighting the realities of lived experience.

2. Showcasing solutions and innovations for the critical masses and affected communities.

In 2024 we deliberated, exchanged, learned, and relearned about issues related to data and technology and how they are driving continental transformation at DataFest Africa under three tracks

Track 1:

Society for Afro-Feminist Data Futures

Sessions under this track explored how data and technology is supporting Afro-feminist movements, addressing gender disparities, and promoting equality across Africa. This track featured sessions that focused on leveraging data to understand challenges faced by African women, focusing on empowering them, promoting gender equality, and addressing biases in technology. This track featured the launch of the Afro-Feminist Data Museum, an interactive data artistry piece combining deep scholarship and critical thinking alongside a creative representation of pressing socio-political issues intersecting with art, technology and feminism.

Track 2:

Society for Innovation

This track highlighted how data and technology are driving innovation in Africa, fostering economic growth and well being. Featured sessions showcased African innovations mostly and creations in various sectors encouraging idea exchange to address local challenges. Notably, this track featured a Tech-Garden that brought together innovators and academics through interactive sessions that critiqued and gave insight into the future of data and technology for good.

Track 3:

Society for Digital Resilience

Through this track, Pollicy continued to acknowledge the complexities of digital activism and the need for continuous strategies to preserve digital rights and its defenders. Sessions under this track explored strategies for building digital resilience for African communities while centering self care and wellness as a form of resistance and self preservation that is necessary for regrouping and having a balanced foundation.

DataFest Africa 2024 In Numbers

Total Number of in-person attendees **310**	**Total number of virtual attendees** **631**	**Travel Grant beneficiaries** **42**
Number of Exhibitors **7**	**Gender representation of In-person attendees** **Male** | **Female** **169** | **141**	**Total number of sessions** **41**

Speakers and Session Leads

The event featured 130 speakers from various regions, including East and Central Africa (Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo), West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Cameroon), Southern Africa (Mozambique, South Africa), as well as international participants from Europe and North America.

Access the full list of speakers here; https://datafest.africa/speakers/

Sponsors

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pawaIT — Powering your business through Cloud technology

DataFest Africa 2024 in Summary

Day one

Opening Ceremony

To officially open up DataFest Africa 2024, Phillip Ayazika, Pollicy's Director of Programs, in his address welcomed attendees to the 5th edition of DataFest 2024 highlighting the many data regulations that are in the works across many African countries urging experts and policy makers to ensure these legal frameworks strike a balance and are effective and equitable.

"Data is a form of power and in this super election year of 2024, we have already witnessed a rise in AI generated propaganda necessitating discussions on the adoption and utilisation of AI by citizens and Governments." stated Phillip. He further expounded that while both state and non-state actors are increasingly leveraging the power of technology and data, particularly in Africa, there are some important steps that must be taken to safeguard these developments.

At the opening ceremony, Prof. George Nyabuga, the Associate Dean of the Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications (GSMC) highlighted how data and technology continue to be pivotal in driving social change and enabling informed decision-making, with policy initiatives aiming to empower Africans to better harness data for socioeconomic development. He noted that data analysis is now essential in both professional and everyday life, improving efficiency and outcomes. He further highlighted how Kenya continues to emerge as a key hub for Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) in the region as well noting how the rise of AI-generated propaganda, particularly during elections, is impacting democracy requiring urgent dialogue on the issue.

Farhana Alarakhiya, the Chief Data Innovation Officer at Aga Khan University in her lightning talk on Electronic Health Record Data for Population Health Research Shared some startling facts noting that if digital transformation happens around health care settings, then by 2030, data-driven healthcare interventions could save 1 Million lives in Africa annually. She further noted that people are not fully leveraging data despite being surrounded by enormous amounts of data. She added that the introduction of Electronic Health Record (EHRs) can improve health record data management by streamlining administrative tasks, reducing paperwork, and quicker accessibility to patient's records to inform decision making and saving lives. "Electronic health records provide comprehensive and the latest information, enabling healthcare providers to make decisions, reducing errors, and improving overall patient outcomes." She noted.

She also highlighted other benefits of EHR to include; capturing comprehensive information around patient journey in the hospital, having capacity to store historical data and providing a platform to build large scalable data repositories building important datasets that inform further research, and enable early diagnosis that could allow for the prevention of several communicable and non-communicable diseases.

To further lighten up the room, Burundi-born youth activists and artist Jean Irakoze delivered a moving poem on Youth, Data, and Technology.

"Youths have dreams, and they need to share them with each other. We have data, but we need to learn how to use it better. As women, we need to advocate for ourselves and the new generation by sharing our stories with each other. The youth are the future; they can take advantage of technology and data and be responsible in their use." Jean narrated.

Keynote Address

To deliver the Keynote address, Oscar Otieno, the Deputy Data Commissioner, at the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, Kenya compared the use of data in the past and in current times. He noted that in the past, data was used primarily for business analysis and that Personal Identifiable Information was not a concern, and both structured and unstructured data were used without much regulation and no emphasis on principles like data minimization leading to "unethical' practices like excessive data collection and utilisation beyond the intended and specific purposes. s. He noted that however today, data is being categorised into corporate data and personal data, reflecting a more organised approach to its collection, processing, and use, practices that are now rooted and guided by the concept and principles of data protection. further explained to the audience how data and technology are driving inclusive growth and sustainable development in Africa and concluding with a note on increasing data literacy among communities to enable a user centric data ecosystem where users and citizens have a say and are involved in designing their own solutions using context-specific approaches.

How is Data and Technology Driving Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development in Africa?

This opening panel emphasized the significance of data and digital literacy to micro-communities to enable them to understand the relevance of data and technology and be able to influence initiatives that understand their community assets as opposed to only the needs, their capabilities, and limitations. This way from an informed point of view micro communities can better leverage data and technology for their development.

It was also emphasized that innovation and creativity are essential when designing solutions seeing that challenges in Africa require context-specific approaches that often necessitate thinking outside conventional methods. Open-source technologies were identified as crucial for ensuring that technological solutions are accessible and affordable meaning that these technologies can be modified and adapted to meet specific local needs, fostering innovation and enabling widespread use without the high costs associated with proprietary systems.

An example of the UNO Reverse Card on Climate Change was shared as one that leveraged technology to address climate change. By adopting sustainable technologies and practices, it was noted that Africa can mitigate the adverse effects of climate change while promoting economic growth and resilience. This proactive approach transforms potential crises into catalysts for development. It was emphasized that cross disciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches would help to address complex issues by harnessing diverse expertise, resulting in innovative and sustainable strategies for growth and development.

Launch of the Afro Feminist Internet Scorecard & Afro Feminist Internet Awards

Pollicy in collaboration with the Protege Qv in Cameroon, Union Congolaise des Femmes des Médias (UCOFEM) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, The Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) and International Association of Women in Radio and Television Kenya Chapter (IAWRT) in Kenya, Observatório das Mulheres in Mozambique, AfricTivistes in Senegal, Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) in Tanzania, and the Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) and Media Focus on Africa in Uganda launched its very first Afro Feminist Internet Scorecard, a tool to evaluate internet accessibility, inclusivity, and safety for women and marginalised communities across seven African countries as well as the launch of the Afro Feminist Internet Awards to recognize individuals, organisations, and initiatives that have significantly advanced digital rights, gender equality, and feminist principles of the Internet.This annual scorecard shall identify areas of progress and ongoing challenges, offering a roadmap for a more equitable digital environment while engaging key stakeholders like policymakers, tech companies, and civil society organisations.

Access this scorecard here; *https://bit.ly/420sE9h*

What's the Balance? Regional vs National Data Governance Frameworks in East Africa.

This session led by Amnesty International and a range of experts from the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, Director, Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT), ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa and GIZ African Union examined the balance between regional and national data governance frameworks in East Africa. The session emphasized the need to harmonise data governance across the region, highlighting how isolated funding models can limit research and progress on key governance issues.

 Access the session highlight video here; *http://bit.ly/4j0E0kx*

Building SMART Recommendation Systems in Python (Using Intellikit)

In this session, Pollicy's data products team delved into recommendation systems and also explored advanced methods such as collaborative filtering, content-based filtering and knowledge based recommendation for developing sophisticated recommendation systems, emphasising their critical role in enhancing user personalization, tailoring user information, optimising marketing strategies, and enhancing user loyalty. Participants were also introduced to the intellikit framework, an open source tool kit for case based reasoning in Python.

Improving service delivery using citizen-generated data

This workshop highlighted Talk to SEMA, a Ugandan successful case study of how citizen-generated data is informing and improving public service delivery. In the session it was demonstrated how the USSD code architect allows citizens to submit data and feedback via simple text messages, making it accessible even in areas with limited internet connectivity as well as the use of QR Codes to allow for quick and easy access to surveys as a public service evaluation mechanism through smartphone scans. Personal Interviews were also discussed as formats to provide detailed and qualitative insights through direct interactions, particularly useful in understanding complex issues or gaining in-depth feedback.

The session emphasized aspects of Transparency and Accountability as key to the process and an example of a livedata dashboard available to the public was used as an allowing citizens to view relevant data and track the performance of service delivery institutions vis a viz the feedback and service ratings received promoting trust and citizen engagement in the service delivery transformation process.

Design and Distribution: Amplifying the Impact of Afro-Feminist Data Insights

In this session, Banisoro Design interactively explored designing and distributing information graphics (inforgraphics) that effectively communicate data insights focused on Afro-feminist issues emphasizing storytelling as an element that bridges the gap between complex data and everyday understanding making it accessible to those unfamiliar with technical jargon. This session exposed participants to tools that allow for the transformation of raw numbers into meaningful insights fostering a deeper connection with the audience and inspiring action and change while avoiding exaggeration, maintaining credibility, and telling meaningful stories.

The Future of News: How Emerging Technologies are Transforming Journalism and Narratives

This round-table discussion session convened by and for journalists and content creators, shared insights into the opportunities and challenges presented by emerging technologies to better understand the evolving role of journalists, the ethical considerations surrounding new tech adoption in newsrooms, and the potential for enhancing storytelling and media transparency.

Through this session, journalists acknowledged how emerging technologies have significantly shifted newsrooms and news consumption by accelerating the news cycle, with the audience receiving news ahead of traditional media releasing it, hence making citizen journalism more pronounced. Misinformation was, however, identified as one of the challenges that has cropped up with these emerging technologies, with the general masses having the power to develop, curate and distribute news and content. It was also noted that traditional media's sustainability is increasingly compromised by emerging technologies that alter how news is consumed and financed. Social media platforms are favoured due to their efficiency, providing maximum return with minimal effort, leading to a preference for these digital channels over traditional media.

Despite these developments, journalism remains a critical tool for fostering accountability and technology, an enabler that facilitates news dissemination and accessibility. It was discussed that emerging technologies are not here to replace traditional media but rather enhance how news is delivered and to achieve this, newsrooms must embrace technology to foster closer connections between journalists and their audiences, journalists should also aim to present information in a clear and relatable manner just like social media to expand and enrich content thus providing audiences with a greater sense of satisfaction and fulfilment.

Leveraging data for advocacy: Research and Policy Recommendations in Africa

This discussion led by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) centred around using data as a tool for feminist advocacy, understanding the geopolitical complexities of technology, and challenging entrenched power structures. It was grounded that research is an aspect for identifying and addressing tech-related issues and fostering a better understanding of the interrelated realities in Africa. It was however noted that without access to accurate data, Africans face misrepresentation. Issues of duplication of data and objectification of communities were discussed as well as the importance of dissemination, with a focus on making data accessible to those who need it.

Data was described as a form of storytelling, shaping narratives that inform decision-making and guide interventions. It was noted that control over data allows communities to reclaim power, challenge dominant structures, and push for meaningful change. This session emphasized the role of data in revealing insights about who we are, what we do, and how we interact with broader phenomena. This understanding is essential for creating policies that accurately reflect the lived realities within African contexts. Ethical research practices and effective dissemination strategies were deemed vital for ensuring that data benefits the communities it comes from. Revisit the session here

Day Two

The Power of Gender Data in Afro-feminist Data Futures

To kick off day 2 was a panel featuring Pollicy's Executive Director joined by the Association for Progressive Communications, My Data Rights Africa and Feminist Conversations Kenya to discuss the power of gender data in the visioning of an Afro-feminist Data Future and the future of feminist programming in Africa. This session also provided a snippet into Pollicy's new strategic plan.

Irene Mwendwa, Pollicy's Executive Director highlighted the organization's achievements over the past seven years noting that Pollicy is committed to collaborating with a range of stakeholders to harness the power of data and co-create products and solutions that will enable an equitable digital ecosystem that works for and not against the African people. She highlighted that Pollicy's strategic plan 2024-2027 would focus on three impact goals including;

1. A Safe and Joyful Internet to ensure that the digital space is secure and inclusive for all users.

2. Data Policies & African Governments, focusing on advancing data policy initiatives in collaboration with African governments to support effective data governance.

3. A Transformative Organisational Evolution focusing on enhancing Pollicy's impact through organisational growth and adaptation.

This discussion also emphasised the role of funders in supporting feminist initiatives as well as the importance of integrating gender data into policy-making to address systemic inequalities. Panelists also emphasized the need for data-driven solutions that cater to the unique needs of diverse African communities.

Innovative uses of data to address healthcare challenges in Africa

This session by the Aga Khan University that featured Google East Africa, Mayo Clinic Platform, Penda Health and MEDITECH SA explored how the innovative use of data is tackling and leapfrogging Africa's unique healthcare challenges. By implementing Electronic Health Record systems alone, it would be insufficient for saving lives; if not complemented with developing the necessary local expertise and investing in advanced technologies to maximise its benefits.

An innovative approach of using large language models (LLMs)-based WhatsApp chatbots to boost patient engagement and improve response times was raised. However, caution is required as LLMs can produce misleading or erroneous information, which could be dangerous in diagnostic processes if not properly monitored.

DataFest Tech Garden: Innovators Talk

This session hosted selected innovators, data scientists, tech-preneurs, creatives, academics and techies stepping into the spotlight to present their innovative projects, ideas, and initiatives.

One major topic was climate change, particularly the challenge of rising temperatures due to global warming in Africa. As Africa aims to become the largest food producer within 25 years, this climate challenge poses a significant setback. Open Africa, one of the innovations featured, is focused on liberating data across various African countries to address this issue.

Another critical issue discussed was the harassment of women on social media. Since 2009, there has been a notable decline in female happiness due to harassment, sexual abuse, depression, and other mental health challenges exacerbated by misogynistic influences online. Safe Hub, an innovation presented at the event, aims to provide a supportive platform where women can express themselves and report harassment cases.

The session also explored artistry and storytelling through innovations like Afritales and Braiding Nairobi. Afritales focuses on telling stories from the deaf community, including the experiences of sign language interpreters and those who are hearing impaired. Meanwhile, Hair Braiders Nairobi highlights the narratives of hairdressers and their interactions with clients, connecting these stories through their platform.

Visualising Legal and Policy Research: Reimagining Research Communication

This session by the Africa Internet Rights Alliance (AIRA) featuring BudgIT Nigeria, Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT) and Banisoro Design Agency explored innovative approaches to visualising legal and policy research, demonstrating how visual storytelling can transform dense information into accessible and engaging content.

Disseminating information, especially in academic research, presents several challenges, such as the use of jargon, unsynthesized research, and conveying complex information to users. This session showcased innovative methods to address these gaps. Storytelling emerged as a powerful tool to connect with audiences of varying literacy levels, simplifying information without losing its depth or meaning. BudgIT, a prominent example, was founded on the principle of simplifying dense information from formal government reports.

For research it was agreed that some key components are: identifying the target audience, accuracy of the research, tracing findings back to foundational data sources to maintain transparency and also collaboration with journalists and communicators, especially those not directly involved in the research process, helps ensure that research findings are effectively communicated to the intended audiences.

Harnessing GIS and Mobile Data for Climate Resilience and Adaptation

This session by Local Development Research Institute (LDRI) interrogated the growing optimism about the role of digital innovations in supporting climate action and transforming agricultural markets. It also introduced participants to LDRI's Early Warning System and how to harness GIS and earth observation data to improve community resilience to the effects of climate change. One significant challenge discussed was the resource-intensive process of manually annotating farming images. Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) can help streamline this process, making it more efficient.

Another critical area of focus was the importance of early warning systems in mitigating the impacts of climate-related disasters. However, current systems are not tailored to the needs of smallholder farmers, who require localised and precise data to take timely action. Collecting high-quality data also presents challenges, as it requires training farmers to take consistent, high-quality photos and to monitor crops regularly. Cultural sensitivities surrounding land ownership and labour resources further complicate the process. Effective communication in local languages is crucial for smallholder farmers to fully benefit from climate adaptation strategies. The session emphasized the need for Small Language Models (SLMs) to ensure accurate descriptions in low-resource languages, as translation can vary widely across different dialects. Gathering audio data, such as local names for pests and diseases, is also essential, given that many farmers rely on speech-driven communication.

Additionally, providing farmers with devices capable of capturing high-quality data is necessary for accurate monitoring. However, this solution is not without challenges, as sustainable and scalable methods are needed to avoid placing an undue burden on farmers while ensuring the accuracy of data collection.

Social Media Analytics and Combatting Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)

The explorative panel explored the critical role of social media analytics in identifying, understanding, and combating Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV).

Nendo in collaboration with Pollicy conducted social media listening by utilising Brandwatch, the world's leading social listening tool and came up with Dada Disinfo: Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) report which outlines the pervasive issue of TFGBV in Kenya's vibrant but volatile social media ecosystem. Nendo through an internal process created categories of abuse that could be used to classify various abusive tweets i.e Appearance-Based, High Standards of Qualification, Insult, Religious and Sexual Violence Attacks.

In the report, of the 42 respondents who experienced TFGBV, 15 reported emotional distress, and 12 noted damage to self-esteem. They viewed TFGBV as more emotionally and psychologically harmful than physical violence, with its impact often leading to severe distress, including suicidal thoughts or death by suicide. Strangers online were identified as the largest group of TFGBV perpetrators by 72% of respondents, with many noting the role of anonymous users. However, when broken down by gender, 50% of women who experienced TFGBV reported that the perpetrator was someone they knew (e.g., ex-partner, friend, family member), compared to only 29% of men. This highlights the need to address TFGBV within personal relationships and social networks as well as conducting joint cross-sectoral research further investigate and understand the inner workings of

Addressing gender disparities through Digital Platforms - Mozambique Experience

The session by Observatório das Mulheres and Akazi highlighted key developments in Mozambique's digitization. Digital activism which surged since the onset of COVID-19, showcasing the potential of digital platforms. Mozambique is also moving toward paperless data collection, signalling modernization and greater connectivity with Innovation driving this growth, positioning Mozambique as a hub for technological learning and adaptation.

In the session it was emphasized that inclusivity remains crucial, to ensure that all groups benefit from digital advancements. Public data protection policies were also mentioned as essential to building trust and increasing citizen engagement. Stakeholders agreed that collaboration and prioritizing innovation would be key to sustaining Mozambique's digital transformation.
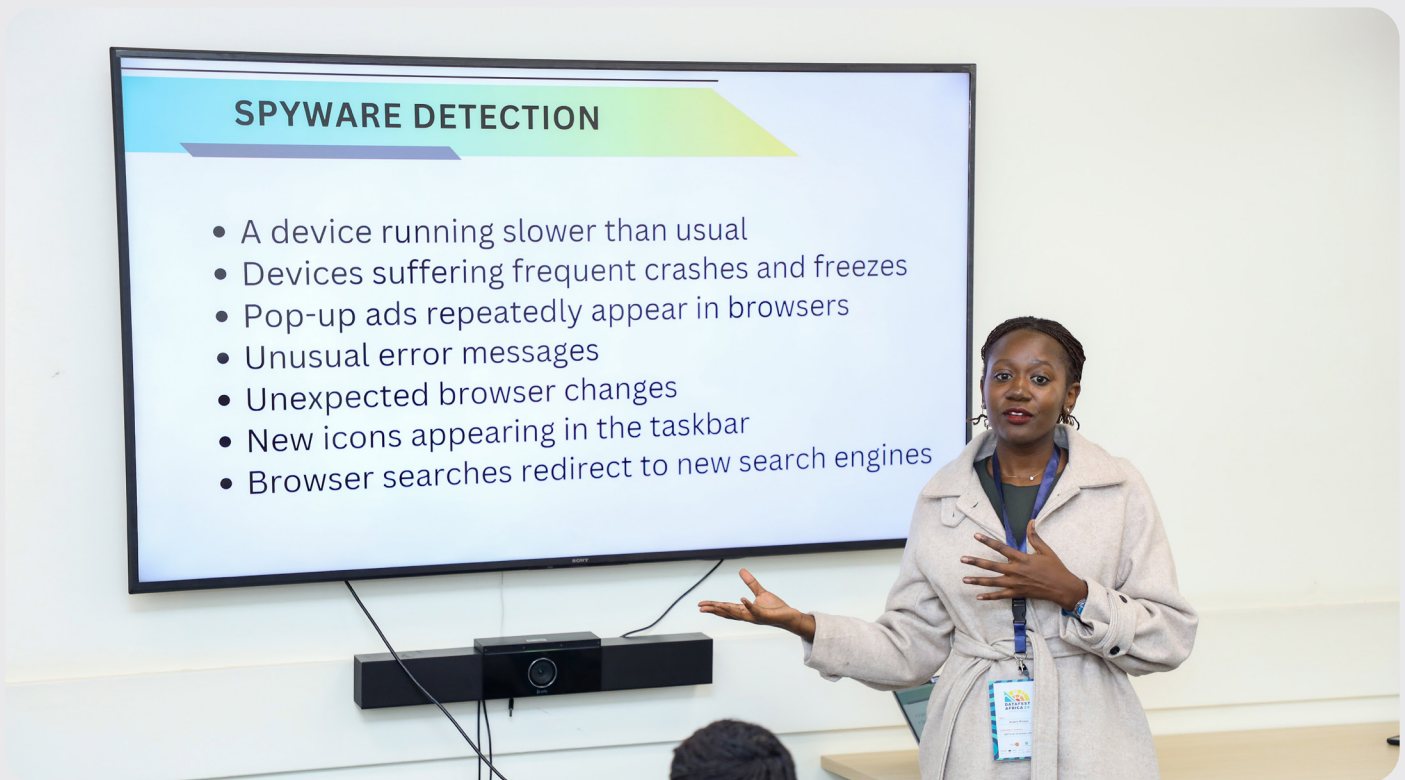
> " *It's crucial to include different social groups in each and every process of digital migration., ensuring that no one is left behind in our journey towards a digitally inclusive society.*
>
> *- Esmeralda Adozinda, Board President, Akazi*

The Impact of Spyware on Civic Space and Feminist Organizing in Uganda

This workshop was hosted by the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), Article 19 East Africa and Digital Rurals explored the various impacts of spyware on the activities and safety of civil society organisations, activists, and specifically feminist groups in Uganda and how to foster a collaborative environment that seek solutions and strengthens digital resilience.

The session highlighted the severe impact of spyware on civic space and feminist organizing in Uganda. Spyware threatens activists and organizations by compromising privacy, safety, and the ability to mobilize. Feminist groups are especially vulnerable, as spyware is used to suppress dissent and monitor activities, creating a power imbalance where the state leverages advanced technologies against under-resourced civic groups, further limiting their influence and efforts.

One of the most sophisticated spyware tools, Pegasus, is often used by state actors for surveillance purposes. Pegasus can infiltrate devices without any user interaction and access extensive amounts of personal data, making it particularly dangerous. In response, tools like the Mobile Verification Tool have been developed to detect the presence of Pegasus and similar spyware on mobile devices, providing activists and organisations with some measure of protection.

However, the asymmetry of power remains a persistent issue. The state's access to advanced technological resources allows it to deploy spyware on a large scale, putting activists and organisations, especially those working in feminist spaces, at a significant disadvantage. This imbalance further exacerbates the challenges faced by these groups as they work to resist surveillance and protect their fundamental rights.

Building Large Language Model (LLM) Powered Applications

This interactive tutorial by Pollicy's data products team brought together developers, data scientists, and AI enthusiasts eager to build intelligent applications using Large Language Models (LLMs).

The workshop introduced participants to the basics of large language models (LLMs), explaining how they generate human-like text using vast training data. LLMs excel in tasks like translation, summarization, and question-answering. Key steps in their development include data preprocessing, model design, training, fine-tuning, and ongoing evaluation. The workshop also covered practical uses, ethical issues, and the future potential of LLMs across industries.

The session stressed the importance of high-quality data, efficient use of computational resources, and addressing ethical concerns like bias and privacy in building LLMs. Continuous evaluation, staying updated on advancements, integrating LLMs into workflows, and fostering AI community collaboration are essential for optimizing performance and driving innovation.

Leveraging Data and Technology for Inclusive Governance in Africa

This workshop by BudgIT Nigeria focused on exploring strategies for building digital resilience in African communities to harness the opportunities offered by new technologies while resisting and adapting to digital threats and challenges.

> *If we start to package technology to have a mass appeal, then we'll start to experience the impact we are looking for.*
>
> *- Oscar Limoke, CEO, Pawa IT Solutions.*

The session highlighted the evolving role of organisations like BudgIT, which have transformed governance-related information from being merely available to accessible and understandable for the public through visualisations. This approach allows citizens to engage more meaningfully with governance, making complex issues relatable and empowering them to participate in decision-making processes. By presenting information in a form that resonates with the audience, the citizenry becomes more active in governance matters.

The session highlighted how Kenyan Gen Z effectively uses technology to influence governance, showing the power of digital tools for engagement and change. However, it also pointed out challenges, such as limited mainstream adoption of beneficial technologies and the need for development to consider user literacy. In contrast, technologies like betting platforms and high-interest loans have reached low-literacy communities despite their negative impacts, suggesting that similar models could be adapted for positive governance and societal development.

The session highlighted the need for local data preservation in African communities to drive homegrown technological solutions and foster innovation. Promoting data sharing and collaboration can enhance data use for governance. Breaking down governance information for grassroots access is crucial, as local communities often lack resources. Tools like Govspend, PHC Tracker, and me.budget.org in Nigeria demonstrate how technology can improve transparency and public engagement in government projects.

Day three

Breakaway sessions

Datafication and Democracy Fund by the Global South Alliance

This session by Paradigm Initiative detailed the **Datafication and Democracy Fund by the Global South Alliance using case studies** and initial findings of the research by select five organizations from Africa, India, and Latin America. The Global South Alliance[1] is a network of civic tech organisations in the global south that supports one another. It is made up of 13 members and its goal is to empower organisations based in countries in the south and give them a platform to have a voice in the global platform.

The inaugural fund grantees include several impactful projects. In India, the Criminal Justice and Policy Accountability Project examines the colonial roots of biometric surveillance and its impact on current data policies. In Colombia, Corporación Cambia Sostenible reviews the treatment of Venezuelan immigrants and related data challenges. Nigeria's Like a Palm Tree focuses on online safety for children and policy recommendations. Brazil's Centre of Security and Citizenship Studies explores data use in entertainment venues, while Kenya and Nigeria's Ikigai Innovation Initiative integrates data governance into election processes. These projects address issues like privacy, data ownership, and the exploitation of personal data for political purposes, aiming to improve data governance and protect digital rights.

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[1] As of July 2024 The confirmed members of the alliance are Aapti Institute, Data Privacy Brasil, Paradigm Initiative, Asociación por los Derechos Civiles (ADC), Fundación Internet Bolivia, Bolo Bhi, Center for Communication Governance, Digital Rights Foundation, KICTANet, CIPESA, Pollicy and Research ICT Africa.

Out of the Spreadsheet and into the Streets: Effective Data Security and Community Engagement Strategies from Social Justice Campaigns in East Africa

This workshop by Data4Change featuring Youth Voices Community,Lifeline Youth Empowerment Center, LEHA and Law Society of Kenya showcased how multi-stakeholder collaboration amongst storytellers, activists, designers, data, policy, and tech experts can drive effective data strategies through sharing knowledge and best practices from their innovative campaigns.

The session highlighted the plight of sexual minority groups in Uganda who face persecution, and how advocacy campaigns have helped shift the current landscape. These campaigns have the potential to significantly improve the situation by highlighting the rights of individuals in the sexual minority groups and working towards greater acceptance. To further safeguard this progress, there is an urgent need to implement stronger data privacy laws in Uganda to prevent data breaches and protect personal information.

The session emphasized that data collection doesn't always require advanced tools like Google Sheets or Excel. Sometimes, it simply involves going out into the streets, engaging with the community, and starting the work. What matters most is ensuring that the data collected is comprehensive and free from biases, accurately reflecting all aspects of society. Once collected, this data is visualised and shared with other organisations, allowing for easy identification of issues like harassment. This timely sharing of information enables quicker responses and mitigates potential harm. However, while civil society organisations are adept at collecting data, they often struggle to craft compelling stories that resonate with the public.

Wakiabuse Tunareport! Redressing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV), through Afro-centric & Gendered Approaches.

This panel session, hosted by Pollicy featured Young Women Leadership Institute (YWLI), IREX – Transform Digital Spaces Program, Development Gateway, National Gender & Equality Commission (NGEC) and UNFPA explored the critical aspects of TFGBV from an Afro-centric and gendered perspective. Wakiabuse tunareport! in Swahili translating to, if they abuse we will report. An indication of the strategies in place to keep the online space safe and respectful especially for women, girls and gender non binary folks. It was shared that; Afro-centric approaches provide the cultural context needed to address the unique challenges of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in our communities.

The session agreed that tackling TFGBV requires both Afro-centric and gendered approaches to ensure interventions are culturally relevant and sensitive to gender dynamics. This Afro-centric perspective tailors solutions to African socio-cultural contexts, while gender-disaggregated data is essential for understanding the scope of TFGBV and informing effective policy decisions.

> ❝
> *Incorporating gendered data in our monitoring efforts allows us to build a good evidence base to combat technology-facilitated gender-based violence effectively.*
>
> *- Varaidzo Faith Magodo - Matimba, Program Manager, Pollicy.*

Furthermore it was clear that effective online content moderation is a crucial element in combating harmful gender stereotypes that perpetuate violence and discrimination. Addressing algorithmic biases is also vital, as unchecked algorithms can reinforce these stereotypes, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized groups. Collaborative efforts among organizations are essential to developing innovative solutions for TFGBV. It was also agreed that multi stakeholder partners must agree to pool resources and share knowledge, so as to create comprehensive strategies that address the complex and evolving nature of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

Gender Data: Breaking ground for inclusive AI

This session looked at the gendering AI from a concept of power, justice, and feminism ensuring it not only touches down on key barriers and how to address them but most importantly challenges power structures and ensures an understanding is laid out on the impact of AI on gender while also sharing insights from a study that aimed to explore the Artificial Intelligence (AI) ecosystem from a gender perspective across select countries. It was discussed that the AI industry needs diverse women's perspectives to improve the design and application of the latest technologies. The session also explored the different levels to crafting a gender inclusive AI Future.

The session began with regional insights, offering a comprehensive view of gender dynamics in the AI sector across both Anglophone and Francophone East Africa including countries like Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC . Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and preventing data exploitation, were discussed as essential for ensuring AI development respects the rights and visibility of workers from the global south. Challenges such as digital illiteracy and infrastructure bias were identified as significant barriers to gender equality in AI, highlighting the need for equal access to information and opportunities. The importance of effective data governance was emphasized, with technologies like blockchain proposed as promising solutions. The session engaged participants in discussing how to incorporate gender perspectives into AI, focusing on power dynamics, justice, and feminist principles to challenge existing structures and enhance inclusivity

Digital Economy in Africa

This session, hosted by Pollicy, Digital Justice Lab, and the Ford Foundation, featured speakers from the African Union for Content Moderators, a platform worker, Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, the Directorate of ICT at Uganda Police Force, FEMNET, and Voices for Labour. It was a follow-up to the pre-event of the Fairing Digital Work convening, which had brought together 30 stakeholders from Kenya and Uganda. This group included representatives from relevant government ministries and regulatory bodies (such as Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, Uganda Police Force, and the Personal Data Protection Office), as well as civil society organizations focused on digital rights, labor issues, and data governance, platform workers, gig economy representatives, international organizations working on labour rights and digital governance, and academics specializing in the digital economy. This post-session summarized the outcomes of the pre-event, highlighting new opportunities and challenges related to digital rights, data governance, and their impact on economic and labour justice.

It was agreed that while digital platforms have created numerous jobs in areas like ride-hailing, food delivery, cloud work, and content moderation, digital platform workers face precarious and unique challenges, including low wages and limited regulatory and legal protections. Concerns were also raised about data misuse, extractivism, datafication, and monetization, which exacerbate economic inequalities and raise issues of data privacy, ownership, and exploitation.

Content moderators and platform workers reported a lack of bargaining power and vulnerability to exploitation, with poor working conditions contributing to mental health challenges. This highlighted the urgent need for improved labour standards in the digital economy. Additional challenges include the global issue of achieving fair work for platform workers. Civil society organizations (CSOs) struggle to support these workers and advocate for effective policies due to gaps in understanding platform algorithms, data usage, and the legal landscape. Building worker power is particularly challenging due to the diverse backgrounds of platform workers. An intersectional approach was emphasized as a way to enhance advocacy efforts by addressing these diverse needs and promoting more inclusive support.

Regulatory and compliance gaps were also discussed, with many labour legislations in the region failing to address the emerging and complex nature of digital labour specifically not providing for the social protection of digital workers. Both policymakers and CSOs have not yet fully grasped these dynamics, and there is a lack of forums for dialogue between platform workers, governments, and CSOs. It was recommended that governments work more closely with CSOs to regulate and monitor platform operations and improve working conditions for digital platform workers. The session included presentations, case studies, and lectures that shaped recommendations and strategies to help platform workers, CSOs, and policymakers understand the complexities of the digital economy and identify educational, social, and legal pathways to improve digital work and labour standards across the East African region.

Data Governance Master Class

This master class, co-facilitated by Pollicy and Niyel in collaboration with the Africa Data Governance Hub Advisory Council Members, addressed foundational aspects of data governance, including policy development, privacy, and security. The workshop focused on understanding the principles of data governance and their critical role in establishing ethical standards and transparency in the handling of user data. Effective data governance enables organizations to build trust with stakeholders by demonstrating accountability and protecting sensitive information. It also enhances decision-making by ensuring data reliability, mitigates the risks associated with data breaches, and helps organizations comply with legal requirements. Ultimately, data governance fosters a culture of responsibility, improves operational efficiency, and drives business success through better data utilization.

Challenges such as lack of transparency, high participation barriers, and data management stereotypes were discussed, with proposed solutions including comprehensive data protection laws, improved infrastructure, and community engagement. Participants were tasked with building proposals for a Data Governance Framework, focusing on children's education, agricultural firms, and a start-up developing large language models (LLMs) based on local languages for enhanced accessibility. These practical exercises allowed attendees to apply the principles of data governance in real-world contexts.

The workshop also covered data protection and security, emphasizing the need to safeguard sensitive information from breaches and unauthorized access. Key topics included implementing strong encryption, access controls, and regular audits to protect data integrity and confidentiality. Participants were informed about the necessity of complying with national data protection laws to avoid legal consequences. Best practices for incident response and disaster recovery were discussed, ensuring organizations can quickly and effectively handle security breaches.

A notable case study from University UA on Data Governance for Higher Education illustrated practical data governance challenges and solutions in higher education.

The university faced issues like decentralized data management and privacy concerns. To address these, it established a data governance council, standardized practices, and enhanced training, leading to improved data consistency, quality, and compliance. The case study underscored the importance of clearly defined roles and continuous improvement in data governance.

This master class provided key recommendations for the future of data governance in Africa, including: Establishing clear frameworks outlining roles, policies, and procedures. Ensuring alignment with data protection regulations and human rights considerations. Integrating ethical and privacy practices into governance strategies. Conducting awareness campaigns and involving marginalized communities in technology development. Leveraging digital health solutions for pressing healthcare challenges, especially mental health. Upskilling for AI adoption while maintaining data privacy. Developing regulations to support free data flow while respecting privacy. Partnering with local health systems for affordable solutions andPromoting a culture of data-driven decision-making in healthcare.

Exploiting Civic Tech opportunities and strengthening the resilience of African communities

The session by AfricTivistes and co creation Hub, Nigeria focused on exploring strategies for building digital resilience in African communities to harness the opportunities offered by new technologies while resisting and adapting to digital threats and challenges. The discussions centred on the significant potential of CivicTech to enhance the resilience of African communities. Building digital resilience was highlighted as essential for effectively leveraging new technologies while mitigating the risks associated with digital threats. For African communities to fully exploit technological opportunities, they must be adaptable to the digital challenges that come with this evolving landscape.

> *Harnessing CivicTech can transform African communities, but we must build strong digital resilience to fully realise its potential.*
>
> *Ndeye Fatou Diouf, Digital Content Manager, AfricTivistes*

Strategies for digital resilience including capacity building, education, and fostering technological innovation were highlighted as vital to empowering communities to navigate and thrive in the digital age. The session also emphasized collaboration among diverse community stakeholders including local leaders, civic organisations, and tech innovators as crucial to strengthening digital resilience across African regions. Tailoring CivicTech interventions to local contexts further enhances their effectiveness, ensuring that solutions are relevant and impactful.

The need for ongoing adaptation and the implementation of proactive measures to stay ahead of evolving digital threats was another key point of discussion emphasizing that African communities must remain vigilant and flexible in the face of emerging challenges to ensure long-term resilience.

Women in AI: A Creatives Gathering on Data and AI

This session by the Creatives Garage, delved into the disruptive impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Africa's creative community. Curated by the team behind the ONGEA AI Podcast, the session featured conversations with industry representatives from film, literature, music, graphic design, and gaming, exploring how AI is reshaping creative practices across the continent. In the session, participants reflected on the challenges and opportunities for women in AI. One prevalent issue discussed was the fear of technology relations, uptake and use and that persists among many women, partly because AI has been predominantly developed by men, leading to a noticeable female bias. AI tools and platforms are often designed with traditionally masculine themes, such as blue and black colours, which can unintentionally discourage women from entering and thriving in the field.

Additionally, gender roles particularly in the African context play a significant role in shaping access to opportunities. Men often have more time to study and work in labs, which allows them to further develop their skills in AI and technology as opposed to women, who may face greater limitations in terms of time and resources, thus reducing the number of women who enter the tech space. Amidst all this, AI was presented as a unique opportunity to reshape narratives, particularly for women in journalism. Women are often contextualised as victims in media representations, but AI can help shift these narratives, providing a tool for empowering women and altering the way their stories are told.

Furthermore, It was noted that AI has the potential to increase women's participation in both political and economic spheres, helping to balance the gender equation. As more women engage with AI, the field will likely see changes in behaviour and perspectives regarding its adoption. It was therefore agreed that efforts should be made to integrate AI in ways that are appealing to women, while also raising awareness through mentorship programs and initiatives designed to support girls in AI.
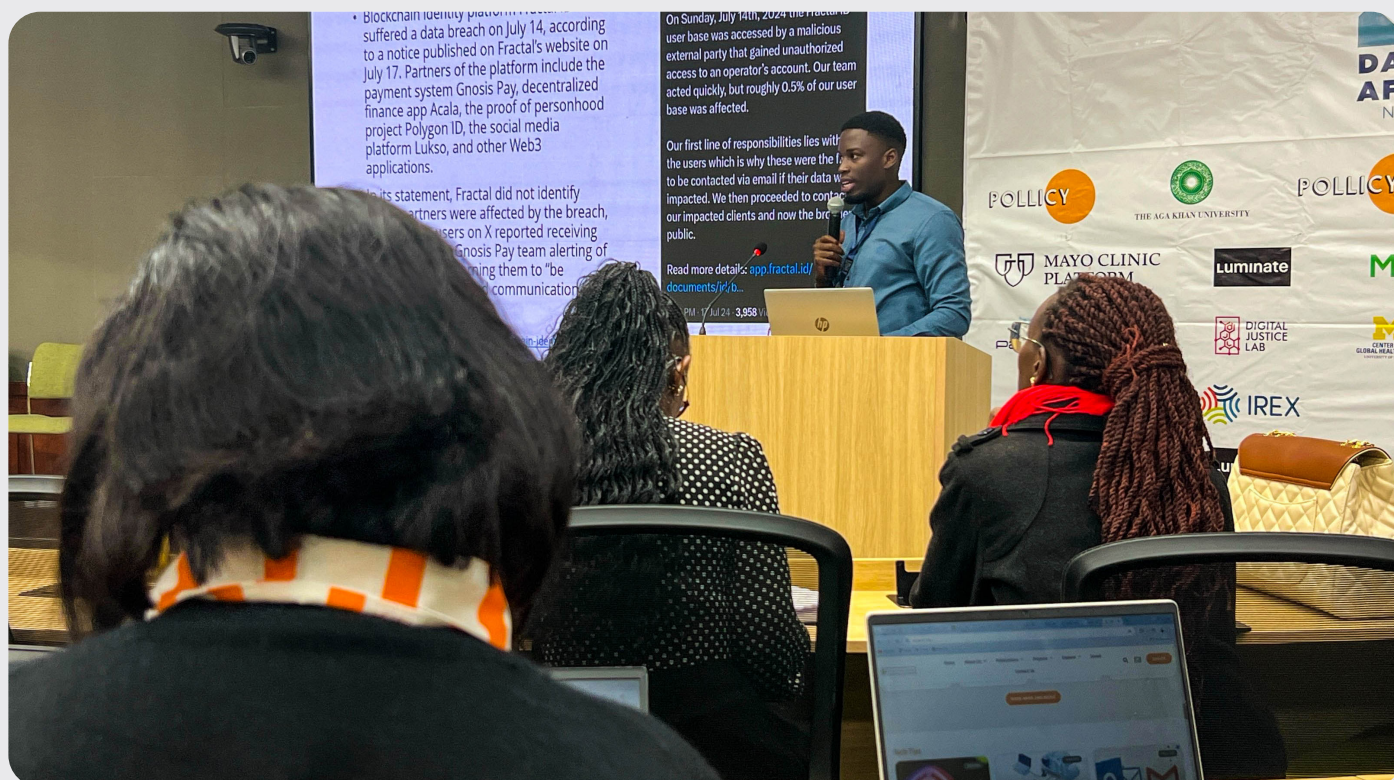
It takes a village: Rethinking African child safety in the digital space

This session was hosted by Kids Comp Camp featuring a Trust and Safety Practitioner, Play Africa, Mtoto News and Watoto Watch Network highlighted and centered prominent concerns from the public on children's safety and well-being in digital spaces.

Stemming from the African narrative of raising children as a communal responsibility, not just the duty of the mother alone. This cultural perspective was central to the discussion in a session focused on child safety in the digital space. Panellists emphasized the importance of understanding how digital technologies impact children's well-being and development. As children increasingly interact with online platforms, digital literacy becomes essential for helping them navigate these spaces safely. Parental responsibility was another key point of discussion. Parents must actively monitor and guide their children's digital activities to ensure their safety online. However, the session also highlighted that the responsibility should not rest solely on parents. Policymakers play a crucial role in creating regulations and guidelines that protect children in the digital world.

Artificial Intelligence and the Integrity of African Elections

This session focused on safeguarding democracy in the face of technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), also highlighting the potential dangers of political ads that use AI technology to generate deceptive and false content.

> *As Africa navigates this "super year" of elections, with close to 19 countries headed to the polls. It is no secret that election and information integrity, together with voting rights will come under pressure. "AI's potential to create deceptively realistic false content threatens the very foundation of democratic elections.*
>
> *Raymond Amumpaire, A Digital rights advocate and Advisory Member of the Africa Data Governance Hub.*

The appropriation of AI-generated disinformation and misinformation to delegitimize electoral institutions, processes and influence voter behaviour towards elections is one of the many examples of how AI has been used to influence how people think and act making the protection of the voters' right to make informed decisions paramount in this age of AI-generated misinformation. The session lead discussed that safeguarding democracy from AI is critical for ensuring the integrity of African elections with the rise of AI-generated false content, such as deep fakes, which present significant risks to electoral processes by creating deceptively realistic political ads that can mislead the public about candidates' positions and events. This manipulation threatens voters' fundamental right to make informed decisions.

It was noted that as AI continues to evolve, effective measures are urgently needed to detect and counter AI-generated misinformation in all formats including audio and visual contents during and beyond elections. Public awareness about the dangers of AI in electoral contexts was also raised as essential to preventing the misuse of AI. Notably, collaboration between various stakeholders was also noted as being key to developing strategies that protect the electoral process from AI-related threats.

Misinformation response at scale: Fact-checking, Clustering, and Language Models

The interactive session led by Meedan explored innovative approaches to countering misinformation on social media platforms and closed messaging apps during elections and crises. The discussions emphasized the need for innovative approaches to effectively counter misinformation during elections and crises pointing out fact-checking, clustering, and language models which have emerged as powerful tools in addressing false information. However it was noted that social media platforms and closed messaging apps continue to rise and serve as the primary channels for the spread of misinformation and that interventions must be adapted to these mediums.

It was discussed that tailoring messages to the local contexts enhances the effectiveness of these efforts, ensuring that the response resonates with the target audience. Collaboration between data engineers and customer success managers was noted as leading to impactful solutions, particularly when technologies are adapted to the specific needs and environments of organisations. Maintaining proactive measures and engaging in continuous monitoring was highlighted as essential for safeguarding the integrity of information in the face of ongoing misinformation challenges.

Hate speech, discrimination, and gender-based violence: The ordeal of women journalists in the DRC during times of war

Curated and led by Afia-Amani Grands-Lacs, this session discussed the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly in North Kivu, which has severely impacted the media landscape, with strict censorship and bans on reporting about the M23 rebellion with women journalists especially facing heightened risks of attack and discrimination, living in constant fear as they attempt to carry out their work.

The M23's control over certain areas has forced many journalists to flee, creating a pressing need for work resilience support and funding to ensure their safety and security as they continue to do their work in the face of often being falsely accused of collaborating with rebels. Women journalists are frequently blackmailed, with private sex tapes and images being used as tools to silence them. Their personal lives are invasively scrutinised, further compromising their freedom to work. Additionally, women in the profession are unjustly perceived as sexually liberal, which leads to even more stigmatisation, creating both professional and personal challenges.

In Goma, journalists' families are threatened as a tactic to enforce censorship, forcing many to flee the country in search of asylum. These threats, coupled with censorship measures, lead to cases being raised against them, driving further self-exile. Online harassment is rampant, particularly when journalists speak out against issues such as mining injustices. This abuse leads to self-censorship, as existing laws fail to address online gender-based violence (GBV) effectively. Social media platforms like WhatsApp are often used by journalists for safe communication, but women face significant abuse on platforms such as Twitter (X) and Facebook, further exposing them to online violence.

Public data for public good: Exploring provision of education through Data Comms

This session by Data Comms featuring The Distributed AI Research Institute (DAIR) and Azizi Africa explored howe how public data and effective communication could improve educational access for children. It highlighted that the availability of public data plays a critical role in identifying areas with insufficient educational infrastructure, enabling policymakers and organisations to allocate resources more effectively. Public data can also help track educational outcomes, such as literacy rates, allowing governments to focus efforts where they are most needed.

Additionally, public data enables more efficient management of resources by identifying gaps in the system, such as schools lacking qualified teachers or essential learning materials. This information can drive interventions to improve the quality and reach of education. Effective communication of this data to stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and the public, ensures that decisions are based on real-time needs and evidence. As a result, both the expansion of physical facilities and the reduction of financial barriers, such as fees and uniform costs, become more attainable, allowing for a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities.

One of the major barriers to expanding educational institutions and providing free primary education was identified as lack of physical facilities with the absence of adequate infrastructure hindering the ability to accommodate more students and deliver quality education across broader areas. It was noted that educational institutions face substantial financial challenges due to the costs associated making it difficult for institutions to sustain their operations and expand their services, affecting their ability to provide comprehensive and equitable education.

DataCities: Developing an Inclusive Data Governance Framework for Smart City Modelling in Africa

This session by TooroDev presented a case of the "DataCities" program in Uganda, which is promoting practical and resilient data systems for cities' rapid, routine decisions and policymaking for improved urban life. The discussions centered on the various dimensions of city data governance, including the principles, processes, and practices that shape how data is managed within smart city frameworks. It was emphasized that these elements are influenced by factors at the national, regional, and global levels. Key principles discussed included data sovereignty, data integrity, data transparency, accountability, and data solidarity. Data sovereignty emerged as a critical principle, as adherence to existing laws is essential for the success of data governance programs. The proposed City Data Governance framework by DataCities reflects a concerted effort to create a globally connected approach. Currently, a pilot intervention is underway in cities across Uganda, with potential plans for expansion into other East African regions.

The session highlighted the importance of including underserved members of society, such as those from slum communities, in data governance dialogue, seeing that achieving a balance between economic and social benefits is crucial. Additionally, identifying potential risks and developing mitigating strategies with input from all stakeholders involved is essential for effective implementation and sustainability.

Mine is Yours: A Conversation on Digital Asset Inheritance in Africa

This session hosted by Pollicy featured Victory Attorneys & Consultants, The Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT) and Sisule & Associates who collectively interrogated the complexities of digital asset inheritance in Africa, a region rapidly embracing digitalization. Digital asset inheritance has emerged as a crucial issue within Africa's increasingly digital landscape. The range of digital assets such as mobile money accounts, cryptocurrencies,non-fungible tokens (NFTs) among others necessitates clear and well-defined inheritance plans and legal frameworks. However, the absence of such comprehensive legal frameworks complicates the process of transferring these assets in case of owners demise.

Secure storage and management are critical to ensuring that digital assets are properly transferred to heirs. Additionally, cultural nuances and the evolving digital governance landscape in Africa play a significant role in how digital legacies are managed. The distinction between ownership and licensing of digital assets, as well as security concerns related to access and control, further complicate the process. For a smooth transition of digital assets, individuals must provide clear instructions, develop digital wills, and use secure storage solutions such as digital vaults or beneficiary designation tools. Addressing the complexities of digital asset inheritance will require collaborative discussions among governments, platform providers, and other stakeholders to advance legal frameworks and ensure a seamless transfer process in Africa's digital age.

Read more here; https://bit.ly/4iz6EJH

Bring more African Languages Online and break barriers faced by those who speak other languages online

This session hosted by Digital Rurals featuring Oasis Mathare, Art+ Feminism West Africa, Kijiji Yeetu and a South Sudanese Writer, Arts Curator introduced participants to the various Wikimedia projects, their impact, and how language technology tools can increase the visibility of low-resourced indigenous African languages on the internet.

When it comes to languages, there are so many changes and innovations that will be developed which will need to be translated to our local dialects for information to still be accessible for different local communities. Wikimedia is a platform that has been curated to cater specifically for such. There's however a huge challenge in getting people to contribute to African content in their own languages, thus the need to collaborate and develop more programs and technologies that can continually advance local dialects' information. Language is not only about terminologies but also practice. There's a divide between the elders and the new generations due to language preferences; whereas the newer generations are savvy when it comes to global languages, local languages are continuously becoming extinct.

Investing into the internet infrastructure is important in reducing the digital divide. Incorporating accents in the audio technologies in apps is essential to attain mass adoption in our African context. For languages, there is a need to put in more work of the perceptions of our people towards African languages for them to be better appreciated.

> *It is sad that we Africans look down upon our own languages. Statistics is very clear that it is easy to understand sciences and maths in your own language. This signifies the difficulty of our population in understanding technologies that have largely been presented in languages that were not native to us.*
>
> *- Patrick Godi.*

The Future of Work Program launch of the Afrofeminist Internet Scorecard and Awards.

This session convened the Future of Work project Partners including Media Focus on Africa (MFA) and Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA), The Association for Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) The International Association for Women in Radio and Televsison (IAWRT), Protege-QV, UCOFEM, Africtivistes and Observatório MulhereS. During this session Pollicy and partners launched the Afrofeminist Internet Scorecard, a tool that offers a critical reflection on the realities, challenges, and progress made towards achieving an Afrofeminist Internet across seven African countries: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Cameroon, Senegal, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This scorecard serves as both a diagnostic tool and a roadmap for creating a digital space where women can participate equitably, safely, and joyfully.

With women across the African continent continuing to face a range of digital barriers, including online harassment, limited access to digital tools, and systemic exclusion from decision-making spaces in technology this scorecard highlights the lived experiences of diverse African women media practitioners, activists, leaders, educators, technologists, creatives, artists, and community organizers and assesses the ongoing efforts and provides recommendations to achieving a feminist digital ecosystem that prioritizes gender equality and inclusivity.

With this scorecard, partners collaboratively identified priorities and key focus areas for interventions, as well as co-created mini work plans to guide the roll out of these interventions in each of the seven program countries. Partners also developed communities of practice through which they would collaborate, share and exchange knowledge among themselves.

> *We appreciate that Kenya has a better digital landscape compared to Uganda, Tanzania and DRC. We have learnt from our colleague of AMWIK that CSOs have contributed so much advocacy to holding the government accountable on digital inclusion but also developing programs that are tailored to the needs of the marginalised. Therefore, the interventions we shall develop shall not only be based on general data but specific targeting.*
>
> **- East African Community of Practice**

> *"In West Africa and also the Southern, we identify a challenge of language and information consumption to address most of the gender digital divides. So much is being done in the Anglophone countries that can benefit us but the problem is language. We therefore propose beyond our region, that some of the best practices heard from our colleagues of the East Africa region, can be translated into French and Portuguese through the Future of Work program for our accessibility. At our regional levels, we appreciate the value of multi stakeholder involvement to bridge the gender digital divides that are the major problem.*
>
> **- West Africa community of Practice.**

Workshop on Strengthening Design Governance for Safer Online Spaces in Kenya

This workshop organised by Ushahidi in collaboration with the National Coalition on Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation (FeCoMo) and supported by UNESCO provided designers, software developers, and technology practitioners with the necessary skills and tools to address and mitigate harmful content on digital platforms.

The session highlighted the importance of including descriptive alt-text for all images on platforms to assist visually impaired users. It recommended that platforms should also offer adjustable screen contrast settings to improve readability and provide options for toggling web animations on or off to accommodate individuals with cognitive or neurological conditions. Additionally, facial recognition technology was recommended as a means to simplify sign-ups for users with disabilities, while text-to-voice functionality could help users with visual impairments or literacy challenges navigate platforms more effectively.

The participants advocated for the development or adoption of AI language models that support a wide range of local languages and dialects to ensure broader accessibility. It was also suggested that content and interactions be designed to be age-appropriate and relevant to diverse audiences, thereby improving the overall user experience. Participants discussed the need for innovative tools that can effectively process local languages and dialects. The incorporation of fact-checking mechanisms was emphasized to combat misinformation and disinformation, alongside the use of sentiment analysis tools to identify and address potentially harmful or offensive content. Regarding data privacy, the participants stressed the implementation of systems to flag content that shares private information, ensuring that user privacy is protected.

On ensuring consumption of age-appropriate content, rigorous age verification methods, such as requiring users to upload IDs or selfies, were proposed to confirm content suitability. Additionally, establishing strict digital boundaries between adults and children on co-shared platforms was recommended to prevent exposure to inappropriate content. It was suggested that thorough vetting of merchants for compliance and integrity be conducted to maintain a trustworthy marketplace environment. Employing technologies like computer vision and machine learning to verify product authenticity and using social proof such as reviews and endorsements from buyers and trusted partners were also recommended to enhance the credibility and reliability of social media-based marketplace transactions.

Wrap Up of DataFest Africa 2024 and the Launch Afro-Feminist Data Museum featuring the Create-a-thon Sphere Collective Exhibition

To close off DataFest Africa 2024 was the launch of Pollicy's Afro-Feminist Data Museum and the Create-a-thon Sphere Collective Exhibition. The museum is an interactive space for exhibition and data visualisation combining deep scholarship and critical thinking alongside a creative representation of pressing socio-political issues intersecting with art, technology and feminism.

> "The Afro Feminist Data Museum is our way of demonstrating that inclusion is not just an add-on; it extends to audio-visual representation that is digestible and accessible. Having products like these, transform the representation of African women on the internet, most importantly the contribution they have historically made to the data and technology innovation space."
>
> - *Varaidzo Faith Magodo-Matimba, Program Manager, Pollicy*

Supporting contemporary African art and technology industries is vital for developing a good Afrofeminist technology ecosystem. The museum's Create-a-thon initiative fosters artistic expression and raises awareness about feminist data and technology across Africa, highlighting the significance of these fields in advancing feminist agendas. Pollicy will move into phase two of this project to digitize all the featured artistry on an open source platform.

Why DataFest Africa?

How many communities are reached and value?
DataFest Africa reaches over 1,000 participants annually from various sectors across Africa. This includes government bodies, civil society organisations, academic institutions, and the private sector. The value of this outreach is significant: it fosters cross-sectoral partnerships, enhances data literacy, and promotes the adoption of data-driven solutions. DataFest Africa helps to democratise access to data, encourage collaborative problem-solving, and drive progress towards sustainable development goals.

Why should data science be mainstreamed to the African public?
DataFest Africa highlights the crucial need for mainstreaming data science across Africa. By doing so individuals and organisations are empowered to make informed decisions, optimise resources, and tackle critical issues in healthcare, education, and governance. Integrating data science enhances transparency, drives innovation, and fosters evidence-based decision-making, which is essential for Africa's development and resilience in a rapidly changing world

Pollicy as a data champion?
Pollicy positions itself as a leading champion for the use of data in driving social change and innovation. Organising DataFest Africa and supporting initiatives that promote data literacy and ethical data practices has enabled Pollicy to champion the role of data in shaping a more equitable and informed society. The organisation's commitment to advancing data-driven solutions and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders underscores its role as a data champion, dedicated to leveraging data for the betterment of African communities.

Recommendations

Recommendations to governments

Create and enforce strong data governance frameworks led by national data protection authorities or equivalent bodies.

Allocate dedicated funding to ministries of education and technology to develop and implement data literacy programmes as well as collaborate with civil society organisations and the private sector to strengthen practical skills in using data while ensuring that human rights are upheld.

Implement and enforce laws regulating the handling of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) as well as make progress towards the harmonisation of data regulations.

Create a flexible policy environment that encourages innovation, investment in technology, and inclusive growth.

Promote collaboration among stakeholders to ensure technological advancements are accessible to all segments of society.

Prioritise development of initiatives that build and support community structures and networks.

Develop licensing frameworks that protect the interests of local communities.

Establish grants or investment programmes that support collaborative projects focused on advancing technology, data-driven solutions, and building digital resilience among the people and institutions

Promote the implementation of public data protection policies to safeguard privacy and build trust in digital platforms.

Use citizen-generated data effectively to close the communication and service gaps between providers and communities.

Utilize a range of Data Collection Methods to enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data gathered and used to inform policy making.

Use research to address complex geopolitical and social issues, with data serving as a vital tool for driving change and influencing policy.

Integrate artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that leverage health data.

Invest in technology such as satellites, sensors, and drones, which offer cost-effective methods for gathering field data.

Recommendations to the private sector

Comply with privacy laws to maintain stakeholder trust and avoid legal penalties.

Integrate GDPR guidelines, for companies involved in cross-border transactions.

Allocate financial resources to Afro-feminist initiatives.

Comply with international policies, addressing ethical implications of health data use.

Support the creation of user-friendly platforms that match literacy levels, enhance government-advocacy interactions, and translate complex actions into clear impacts

Invest in education and capacity-building to empower communities to use digital technologies effectively.

Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure children's online safety, promoting digital literacy through educational programmes.

Recommendations to CSOs

Advocate for development of comprehensive data governance frameworks that span continental, regional, and national levels.

Invest in capacity-building initiatives to better influence data policies and practices.

Address ethical considerations by recognising and valuing undervalued care work, particularly contributions from African women.

Embrace the concept of Ubuntu to foster a collective understanding and response to violence.

Empower marginalised communities, dismantling systems that perpetuate inequality and exclusion in digital spaces.
Advocate for the decolonisation of the internet.

Ensure accuracy, transparency, reproducibility, and timeliness in research.

Equip students and staff with tools to recognise, report, and combat TFGBV.

Ensure that content moderation tools and user experience improvements are inclusive and accessible.

Equip activists and civic groups in Uganda with anti-spyware tools and education on safe online practices to enhance digital security.

Recommendations to CSOs

Advocate for stronger legal protections to safeguard the privacy and security of civic and feminist organisations.

Encourage the use of secure communication tools and privacy-focused browsers.

Create and promote platforms for meaningful interactions between governments and advocacy organisations.

Invest in research and data collection to build a comprehensive evidence base for informed policy-making and advocacy.

Invest in technical capacity to support the digital economy's growth.

Continuously monitor and update security protocols to adapt to evolving cyber threats.

Collaborate with local and international organisations to develop countermeasures against misinformation.

Implement digital security measures to protect women journalists from online violence.

Address digital asset inheritance by collaborating with legal experts to develop tailored frameworks.

Multimodal approaches to sharing research with diverse audiences.

Recommendations to Academia

Prioritise the collection of representative and unbiased data.

Integrate training on recognising and mitigating biases through rigorous data collection methods and analytical checks in curriculums.

Employ multimodal dissemination strategies.

Provide research training opportunities to prepare future leaders and foster innovative solutions.

Support and expand mentorship programmes for young girls interested in science and technology, engineering and maths as well emerging technologies like AI as well as increase investment in elementary education.

Efficient distribution of educational resources will enhance learning opportunities and streamline the educational journey for students.

Enhance legal frameworks and educational initiatives within tertiary institutions to effectively address technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV).

Recommendations to Pollicy

Facilitate ongoing knowledge exchange among Future of Work project partners to improve country-specific interventions.

Implement mechanisms to track and evaluate the impact of recommendations and initiatives from DataFest Africa, ensuring that actionable outcomes are pursued and effectively assessed