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Internet Shutdown
Advocacy in Tanzania:
How to Prepare, Prevent Resist.

A Needs and Capacity Assessment.

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About this Report

Internet shutdowns are on the rise around the globe. In 2021, Access Now documented at least 182 internet shutdowns in 34 countries, affecting the ability of millions of people to use the internet to access health, educational, social, political, and economic resources. Governments shut down the internet for various reasons; to restrict the circulation of alternative information; to assert control during elections, protests, and contentious political moments; and to target marginalized racial or ethnic communities. Governments often claim that these measures are meant to prevent the circulation of hate speech and ensure public safety and security. Human rights advocates have argued that, while these sometimes are real problems, depriving large populations access to the internet is not a necessary or proportionate response and may in fact be counterproductive. The United Nations Human Rights Council condemned such intentional restrictions in a non-binding 2016 resolution.

When most people think about an internet shutdown, they think about full-scale network blackouts or blanket shutdowns -- when the government hits the "kill switch" and orders internet service providers to disconnect a population from all forms of internet connection. However, there are other, more targeted (and harder to verify and measure) forms of internet shutdowns, including the blocking of popular social media platforms and messaging apps, and "throttling" bandwidth to slow internet connectivity so much that users cannot effectively access or share information. As described by Gustaf Björksten in Access Now's Taxonomy of Internet Shutdowns: The Technologies Behind Network Interference, as international pressure and scrutiny increases, governments are increasingly using "targeted shutdowns, throttling, app blocking, or other less obvious forms of disruption, to escape accountability." Governments often mix various technical approaches to block internet access, for example by throttling connectivity and blocking specific social media platforms in the lead up to an election, before eventually shutting down the entire network.

DEFINING INTERNET SHUTDOWN

For the purpose of this report, an "internet shutdown" is defined broadly to include not only internet blackouts (when the government completely cuts off access to the internet) but also internet throttling (when the network is deliberately slowed) and major instances of blocking (when major social media platforms and messaging applications are blocked).

> **No two shutdowns are alike.**
> **Advocacy needs to be responsive**
> **to local threats, challenges, and needs.**

For the past several years, Internews' OPTIMA project has been working with civil society organizations in countries around the world to better prepare for, prevent, and advocate against internet shutdowns. As part of this process, Internews conducted a global survey of digital rights organizations in 2020 to produce the Internet Shutdown Advocacy Needs Assessment Report. The report outlined the key challenges that advocates face when confronted with the threat of internet shutdowns, the perceived socio-economic impacts of shutdowns, and key resources and skills gaps that civil society needs in these countries to engage in longer-term and more strategic advocacy against shutdowns. Through this survey-based research, respondents noted that resource constraints and the rapid-response nature of advocacy related to shutdowns leads to short-term campaigns focused on ending a shutdown rather than longer-term advocacy to prevent them from happening in the first place. Respondents also repeatedly called for support and resources to build multi-sector national coalitions and raise public awareness about internet shutdowns and circumvention strategies.

In response, OPTIMA has worked with civil society groups in countries in Africa and Asia to build multistakeholder "Prepare & Prevent" networks to develop localized resources, trainings, and advocacy strategies to mitigate internet shutdowns and protect those who are the most vulnerable and targeted. OPTIMA has also developed the Prepare, Prevent, Resist Internet Shutdowns Resource Library, the Interactive Internet Shutdown Risk Assessment and Resource Guide, and the OPTIMA network measurement training.

Coalitions such as #KeepItOn are doing significant work to highlight the threat of internet shutdowns on the international stage, pressure governments, document shutdowns and their impacts, track trends through the #KeepItOn data tracker & annual reports, and coordinate among diverse actors in countries experiencing internet shutdowns. **Additional efforts (and resources) are needed to 1) support internet shutdown advocacy at the national level;** 2) understand the nuanced ways that internet shutdowns impact specific vulnerable populations; 3) engage in longer-term efforts to better prepare key groups for potential shutdowns; and 4) build multi-sectoral coalitions able to deter governments from imposing internet shutdowns.

For this reason, OPTIMA has worked with key digital rights organizations in Bangladesh, India, Senegal, and Tanzania to produce this series of country-specific Internet Shutdown Advocacy Needs Assessments. These assessments sought to better understand the nuanced ways in which internet shutdowns occur in different countries, including:

- Patterns and trends in technical mechanisms used in specific places to shut down the internet;

- Political and social triggering events and government for shutting down the internet;

- Perceptions of the wider impact of shutdowns on economies and societies;

- Differential impacts that shutdowns have on specific vulnerable groups and marginalized populations;

- Laws and regulations that contribute to an enabling environment for internet shutdowns and inhibit advocacy related to censorship and internet shutdowns;

- Perceptions about future risk of internet shutdowns; and

- Perceptions about civil society preparedness and advocacy capacity in areas such as awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement, documentation of impact and network measurement, circumvention strategies and protection of vulnerable communities, and legal capacity to engage in litigation.

This research is meant to not only inform global audiences about specific shutdown threats and civil society perceptions in these countries, but also to serve as a starting point to collaboratively develop national advocacy strategies and engage in deliberate outreach, training, and resource development to target identified challenges and needs in each country. These needs assessments extended the survey-based methodology used in the 2020 report to localize and build in additional space for deliberation, debate, and discussion amongst key communities. The methodology for each report included three stages:

1. Literature reviews on internet shutdown history and background.

2. Survey of key stakeholders: Internews and partner organizations in each country developed, localized, and translated survey questionnaires. These surveys were then distributed to a certain number of key stakeholders who are impacted by internet shutdowns or influential in internet shutdown advocacy.

3. Community deliberation and focus groups: Survey findings were analyzed and presented during in-person workshops in each country, inviting respondents and other key stakeholders from the Prepare & Prevent networks to discuss the findings, provide additional nuance or detail, uncover disagreements or differences within stakeholder groups, and identify recommendations for advocacy strategy and distribution of resources.

It is important to note that the results described in these reports, while based in part on survey findings, are not representative of wider populations in these countries. The methodology specifically sought to uncover the perceptions and experiences of certain communities central to civil society organizations working on digital issues, journalists, entrepreneurs, students, higher education institutions, health providers, telecommunications operators, human rights organizations, women's rights organizations, and minorities and other marginalized groups. Thus, this research is largely qualitative in its methods and its findings, and percentages used throughout this report represent a relatively small, non-generalizable sample size. (For a detailed discussion of the research methodology and demographics for this report, see Appendix A.)

We hope that these reports are useful to advocacy communities in these four countries as well as to the wider community related to internet shutdowns, as well as donor organizations and international groups looking to support internet-shutdown advocacy. We would welcome and encourage replication of this needs assessment process and methodology in other countries experiencing or at risk of experiencing shutdowns. Please reach out to the authors for more information on this and other OPTIMA reports on internet-shutdown advocacy needs, the methodology, and the Prepare & Prevent networks and resources.

> **"The contribution of people on the ground in the fight against internet shutdowns is vital around the world — and it will remain that way until we end this rights-abusing practice for good. We rely on people to report, monitor, run measurements and provide context whenever the internet is shut down. Understanding the local context is crucial in pushing back against internet shutdowns globally."**
>
> Felicia Anthonio

Introduction

When Vice President Samia Suluhu Hassan stepped into the presidency in March 2021 upon the death of President John Magufuli, civil society representatives reported feeling "cautiously optimistic" about the prospect for positive democratic change. Magufuli's five years of authoritarian governance had included the passage of a collection of draconian laws restricting civil liberties and media freedom. That pattern escalated the day before the October 2020 elections, when the country experienced its first internet shutdown. Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, and Twitter were blocked, and remained blocked through the elections, for at least 11 days (Links to OONI data WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Telegram). But only a few months later, in one of her first speeches, President Hassan said media outlets should be reopened, and she pushed back against the notion of Tanzania's "shrinking press freedom."

There have been some promising signs, including the lifting of a ban on four newspapers and occasional official statements promising a reform of the 2016 Media Services Act. Despite these small acts and rhetorical overtures, none of the major laws passed under Magufuli (including the Cybercrimes Act, the Media Services Act, and the Electronic and Postal Communications Act) have been amended or revoked. Journalists and activists have continued to be arrested for defamation, impersonation, and the publication of false information under the Cybercrimes Act. The Change Tanzania civic movement told us in the course of this research that there is also "a close relationship between privacy and censorship in Tanzania," as the government uses the Cybercrimes Act to gain access to the private communications of key political figure and journalists, perpetuating a climate of fear and self-censorship. An online media outlet was refused its license renewal after it covered a protest in July 2022. As one activist noted, "media and activists have figuratively been taken out of "prison," but the laws that put them in prison are still there."

Stuck in this democratic limbo, Tanzanian civil society faces significant hurdles in its push for serious and long-lasting policy reform. Yet, opportunities may open, if, after years of self-censorship and fear of reprisal, the Hassan government is even nominally more receptive to civil society operating openly and engaging the government on media and internet-freedom issues.

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This is the context in which we conducted this research to better understand, during this moment of change and uncertainty, what is possible for Tanzania's civil society to prepare and anticipate future internet shutdowns and to engage in longer-term advocacy and coalition-building to prevent future shutdowns and censorship. According to experts and advocates who participated in this study, government leaders have not acknowledged the 2020 shutdown nor indicated any regret or desire to avoid such practices around elections in the coming years. With local and general elections in 2024 and 2025, now is the time to determine advocacy strategy, build coalitions, prepare vulnerable communities, and make the case to powerful actors that internet shutdowns are neither necessary nor proportionate.

Tanzania is also one of the countries in the world where the use of VPNs and circumvention tools is effectively banned. The Electronic and Postal Communications Act prohibits the "use or distribution of tools that allow people to access prohibited content." In the context of internet shutdowns, especially those that target social media platforms, VPNs and other censorship circumvention tools are vital for staying online and are nevertheless used by many Tanzanian internet users. As discussed later in this report, fears and uncertainties related to the legality of VPN use complicate advocacy efforts.

This research seeks to provide an in-depth examination of how civil society assesses risk and how it plans for potential shutdowns. Drawing on a survey of civil society stakeholders as well as a co-design workshop, this report outlines how civil society perceives the threat of internet shutdowns in Tanzania and how it understands the legal and technical mechanisms for such cutoffs, the social and economic impact of the 2020 internet shutdown on key communities, the key laws and norms enabling shutdowns in the country, and the resources required to prepare for and advocate against future shutdowns.

The recommendations included at the end of the report are based on collective reflections and determinations of key needs and strategic priorities of the Tanzanian "Prepare & Prevent" network, coordinated by Change Tanzania and the Tanzania chapter of the global nonprofit Internet Society. These recommendations are currently being implemented through Internews' OPTIMA project, and we encourage interested parties to contact the authors to participate in coalition activities and to support this work.

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Key Findings

Awareness about internet shutdowns is high, but knowledge is low. Despite having recently experienced a full network blackout during the 2020 presidential elections, there is still little understanding about internet shutdowns, even among journalists and civil society groups. While 71% of respondents reported experiencing an internet shutdown, almost half (46%) reported that they are unable to or are not sure if they can tell the difference between a government-ordered internet shutdown and internet-connectivity problems or technical issues.

Internet shutdowns have a significant impact on democracy and the economy. A large majority (74%) of respondents reported that businesses that rely on the internet are most affected by internet shutdowns. When asked specifically about how shutdowns impact their everyday lives, most respondents (74%) also reported that internet shutdowns prevented them from doing their jobs and about half (48%) directly stated that shutdowns prevented them from conducting business and making money online. A majority (67%) also reported that shutdowns personally impacted their ability to receive vital news and information, and an additional 20% reported that they were specifically prevented from working on campaigns or engaging in direct activism.

People are very uncertain about the potential for future shutdowns in light of changes in political leadership. As the 2020 internet shutdown occurred around the election under the late President Magufuli, respondents and focus group participants were divided about the likelihood of a future shutdown. Almost half (49%) of survey respondents reported that they did not know or were not sure whether Tanzania would experience an internet shutdown in the next three years. An almost equal amount indicated that it is likely or very likely (20%) vs. unlikely or very unlikely (19%) that a shutdown will occur in Tanzania in the next three years. Focus group participants stressed that this uncertainty is largely due to unknowns related to how President Hassan and her government will act around the next presidential election in 2025.

Advocacy remains constrained and legal strategy is unclear. There is a great deal of uncertainty, even amongst legal experts, about the laws that allow for internet shutdowns. A majority (65%) reported that the laws in Tanzania make it easier for the government to shut down the internet and censor online content. Participants discussed the Electronic and Postal Communications Act (2020) and the Cybercrimes Act (2015) as legal frameworks that allow for broad censorship of the media and online spaces. Focus group participants also noted specific laws that were passed or amended in the last few years that inhibit civil society's ability to operate and engage in this kind of advocacy, namely the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Act and the Statistics Act.

Key stakeholders lack the capacity to anticipate, prepare, and prevent internet shutdowns. Most respondents (69%) report that civil society has little or no capacity to stop an ongoing internet shutdown that might happen in the future, and about half (52%) of the respondents assessed that civil society has little or no capacity to engage in preventative advocacy around internet shutdowns. Focus group participants reported a need for additional training, support, and resources in a variety of areas, including increasing public awareness about internet shutdowns, and gathering accurate and localized information on VPNs and circumvention tools, using strategic litigation and other advocacy strategies, gaining knowledge and hands-on experience in collecting and analyzing technical network data and using it in advocacy and reporting, and improving skills to document social and economic impact.

Use of circumvention tools is high, but uncertainty and fear remains about using these tools. There is a need to understand more about local attitudes and fears related to the legal status of VPNs and other internet-shutdown circumvention tools. Tanzanian civil society has a relatively high level of awareness about VPN and circumvention tools, and many report using these tools. The majority (71%) of respondents reported that they have knowledge of these tools and have used them before. However, they also report little knowledge -- and some concern -- about issues such as the pros and cons of various tools and the legality of using them. Additionally, the most common tools reported to be used by respondents were those available in local languages, including Psiphon and the ToR browser, as well as paid VPNs that are heavily advertised. Despite relatively high levels of VPN use in Tanzania, almost half (48%) of respondents said they had fears/worries about using VPNs and circumvention tools. Focus group participants discussed their fears related to the legal ambiguity for circumvention tool use.

Few civil society advocates have technical knowledge about network measurement to document shutdowns and their impact. More than half (56%) of respondents reported Tanzanian civil society's network-measurement capacity as limited to nonexistent. Advocacy related to internet shutdowns needs to be more evidence-based -- hence the need to train more people to collect and correctly interpret it. Focus group participants noted that media professionals especially need this knowledge in order to report potential future shutdowns effectively and in a more nuanced way.

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Background

Tanzania is a United Republic formed in 1964 following the Union of the Republic of Tanganyika and the People's Republic of Zanzibar. Tanganyika attained its independence in 1961, making it the second country after the Democratic Republic of Congo in the East African Community block to gain independence. Tanzania graduated from it's status as a low-income country to a lower-middle income country in a World Bank assessment published in July 2020, based on an increase in annual per capita income from $1,020 in 2018 to $1,080 in 2019. Yet democracy and human rights deteriorated precipitously in the country under the late John Pombe Magufuli, who was president from 2015 until he died in March 2021 of heart complications, amid suspicions that he had contracted Covid-19.

The Maguuli era was characterized by the suppression of media through laws and fines, the use of surveillance and information controls to silence human rights activists and opposition leaders online and offline, and restrictions on political freedom. Tanzania's current president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, was Magufuli's vice president and took office after his death. She became the country's first female president, and has indicated an interest in loosening some media restrictions. For instance, in her initial addresses as president, Hassan ordered the reopening of media houses that had been banned by the predecessor. To further promote media freedom in Tanzania, Hassan directed the Ministry of Information, Communication and Information Technology to review the Media Services Act of 2016. However, Hassan has made no moves to reform laws or to guarantee more political and civic space. Under her presidency, suppression of the media has continued, and political activities remained constrained.

While many other African countries with authoritarian regimes have experienced internet shutdowns in the past decade, Tanzania had not until 2020, when Magufuli was seeking re-election. In the days leading up to and after the Oct. 28 election, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, and Twitter were blocked on multiple networks. The Tor browser, a circumvention tool, also reportedly was blocked.

By that time, Tanzania had an estimated 29.5 million internet users, constituting 49% of the population, according to Statista. The number has since grown to 30 million. An estimated 95% of these internet users access the internet through mobile phones. The GSMA industry standards association puts Tanzania's unique-subscriber mobile internet penetration rate at 18%.

Censorship of News Media and Online Platforms

Over the years, the number of news outlets have grown in Tanzania, and they are fast becoming heavily dependent on the internet as a medium to reach their audiences. Most media houses operate in online spaces through YouTube channels, social media accounts, and/or websites. Despite this growth in online and offline media in Tanzania, Freedom House, in its 2021 annual report, described independent journalists and media in the country   as "subject to harsh repression" by the government. In 2016, Tanzania introduced the Media Services Act, a law that Freedom House described in its report as giving the government "broad authority over media content and the licensing of outlets and journalists." The assessment also noted that the law "prescribes severe penalties, including prison terms, for publication of defamatory, seditious, or other illegal content."

Under Hassan, the government has allowed the reopening of news media that had been banned, and she has spoken publicly about increasing media freedoms. However, little has been done to reform existing repressive laws.

Before Magufuli came into power, Reporters Without Borders ranked Tanzania 75th in terms of press freedom globally in 2015, performing far better than any other East African country except Malawi, which ranked 59th. By 2020, Tanzania had plunged to 124th, due to increased censorship by the state and restrictions on journalists. Rights guaranteed under the Constitution, such as freedom of expression and access to information, are often not upheld, according to the report. Several media houses were shut down between 2016 to early 2021 on government charges such as spreading misinformation and/or inciting violence. Tanzania's ranking on the Reporters Without Borders index has changed little since 2020.

Over the years, the government has made use of laws such as the Electronic and Postal Communications Act (2020), known as EPOCA, to regulate the online space. This law ordered the licensing of bloggers, which has curtailed

freedom of expression and access to information, by adding onerous hurdles for small outlets to operate and by requiring registration and licensing fees that are prohibitively expensive for some bloggers and other smaller media operations (more on this below in "Legal Context"). The new government in 2021 proposed amending the Act, reducing the fees, and removing some of the more draconian restrictions. However, the proposal was rejected by parliament.

The 2020 Internet Shutdown

While the Tanzanian government deployed many forms of information control between 2015 and 2020, the country had never experienced an internet shutdown until the period leading up to the national election on Oct. 28, 2020.

According to the global digital-rights organization Access Now, before the election, the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA) forced telecommunication companies and internet service providers to install internet-filtering equipment from the Israeli firm, Allot. TCRA then blocked social media platforms on Oct. 27, a day before the election. Data from the global network-measurement consortium Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) indicates that WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, and Twitter were blocked on multiple networks from Oct. 27. Measurement data indicates that the services were restored between Nov. 7 and 11, making the total time for the internet shutdown between 11 and 15 days (Links to datasets: WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Telegram). Notably, according to representatives from OONI, there was limited testing coverage after the elections. This makes it difficult to establish whether certain apps and platforms remained blocked on different networks in Tanzania and the exact time they were available.

During the shutdown, the blocked services could only be accessed via Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), which are effectively illegal under Tanzanian law (see below in legal context). The encrypted Tor browser also was reported to

be blocked. As is discussed later in the report, participants in this research describe witnessing disinformation about VPNs and threatening reminders that VPN use is illegal to discourage Tanzanians from employing these tools.

Four days before the election, on Oct. 24, TCRA also ordered telecommunications-service providers to suspend access to bulk short messaging services (SMS) and bulk voice services until Nov. 11, 2020, and reportedly censored individual messages that included election keywords. According to Deutsche Welle, an official of TCRA confirmed that the government had ordered an internet shutdown, though the official refused to disclose his identity as he was not authorized to speak.

The service cutoffs significantly affected digital service providers and businesses whose primary communication channels with their clients require internet-based platforms. One calculation indicated that, for the conservatively estimated 264 hours of total Internet disruption (11 days) and 168 hours (7 days) of social media shutdown, Tanzania lost $27.5 million. However, it is important to note that, due to limited network data collected determining the exact end of the bans on various platforms and services after the election, this estimation is likely conservative.

Legal Context

The above-mentioned 2021 Freedom House report describes how government regulations significantly impact freedom of expression in Tanzania. The report cites as evidence the onerous annual registration and licensing fee of $930 that bloggers and owners of online discussion platforms and streaming services are required to pay. This fee, more than 85% of the average Tanzanian's annual income, significantly stifles the development of citizen journalism and alternative discourse online.

The Cybercrimes Act (2015) has also been used on several occasions to censor citizens. The section used most frequently to prosecute activists is Section 16, "Publication of False Information," which states that "Any person who publishes information or data presented in a picture, text,

symbol or any other form in a computer system knowing that such information or data is false, deceptive, misleading or inaccurate, and with intent to defame, threaten, abuse, insult, or otherwise deceive or mislead the public or counselling commission of an offence, commits an offence, and shall on conviction be liable to a fine of not less than five million shillings or to imprisonment for a term of not less than three years or to both." For instance, a few months after the Act came into law, four Tanzanians were charged under Section 16 for allegedly publishing false election-related information on WhatsApp.

Amendments adopted in 2019, called the Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No.3) Act, made changes to several laws such as the NGOs Act, constraining the operations of civil society organizations (CSOs) and their freedom to engage in advocacy. The definition of the term "NGO" was narrowed in this amendment to exclude important areas of work conducted by NGOs/CSOs, including defense of human rights and promotion of good governance. This directly impacts how NGOs are able to prepare and respond to crises, political events, and elections, not to mention internet shutdowns.

As described above, the Electronic and Postal Communications Regulations of 2020 (which replaced a 2018 version), additionally constrained media entities and bloggers through onerous registration procedures and fees, licensing requirements, and fines. The law also prohibits the "use or distribution of tools that allow people to access prohibited content." This means the VPNs and circumvention tools used to access content safely and anonymously are effectively banned.

No one has challenged the 2020 internet shutdown in court. According to human rights lawyer Daniel Marari, Tanzania does not have any legislation that explicitly gives the government the power to shut down the internet. However, existing laws such as the Electronic and Postal Communications Act could be used to grant the TCRA authority to order service providers to block or filter content that officials deem problematic. If providers fail to comply with such orders, they face significant penalties.

The Hassan Era

With the passing of President Magufuli in March 2021, Tanzanians were hopeful of a less repressive regime. The new president has taken some steps, albeit slowly, to improve relations with media and civil society groups that were targeted during the Magufuli presidency.

In February 2022, the new Hassan government lifted a ban on four newspapers that had been imposed during Magufuli's time. One of the papers, Tanzania Daima, is owned by opposition leader Freeman Mbowe. However, as documented by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), arbitrary arrests of journalists and media shutdowns continue to occur. In May of 2022, to mark World Press Freedom Day, Hassan announced that she had ordered her administration to review the Media Services Act of 2016 and expressed a desire to "come up with better and friendly laws and regulations that would protect journalists and open more space for the freedom of expression and the media." At the same time, however, she warned against "irresponsible journalism," and Minister of Information, Communications and Information Technology Nap Nnauye noted that the media laws are still in force, that they "can be exercised at any time," and to not "push the envelope." There have been no updates or announcements of the status of this review process for more than six months.

No internet shutdowns have occurred in Tanzania since the 2020 elections. There have also been no acknowledgements or indications from government leadership to express regret about the 2020 internet shutdowns or indicate that shutdowns will not be used again in the future. Though human rights advocates have expressed "cautious optimism" that the current leadership might improve the conditions under which they labor, they remain uncertain about the future of human rights, including internet freedoms, during the rest of her Hassan's tenure.
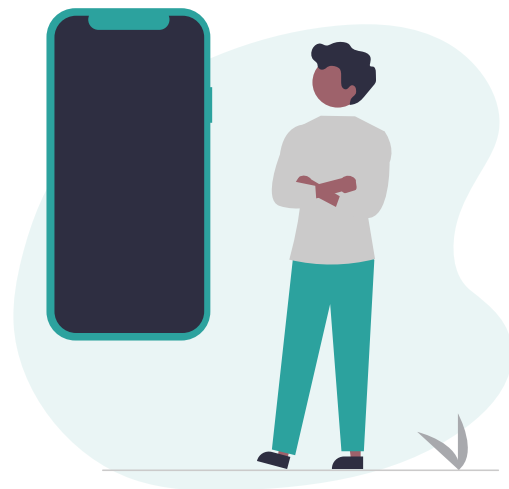
Detailed Research Findings

Knowledge About Shutdowns and Past Shutdown Experiences

A large majority of the respondents (71%) reported that they knew of past internet shutdowns where they live, with 19% reporting such an occurrence within the past year and an additional 52% reporting a cutoff in their area within the past three years. An additional 19% responded that they did not know or were unsure. This finding is particularly interesting, considering there is verified evidence and documentation of the nationwide internet shutdown that began before the Oct. 28, 2020, presidential election, and lasted for at least 11 days.

In order to better understand these answers, our team asked the focus group and workshop participants why there might be so much disagreement or lack of understanding related to the 2020 internet shutdown. Several respondents noted that there is little understanding, even amongst journalists and civil society groups, about how to define a shutdown. In addition, participants noted that internet service is not reliable in much of the country, and therefore people have become accustomed to moments when the internet does not work and assumed that the 2020 shutdown was due to technical problems. This sentiment is in line with survey findings as well. Almost half (46%) of all respondents reported that they are unable to or are not sure if they can tell the difference between a government-ordered internet shutdown and internet connectivity problems or technical issues.

Others noted that the blocking of Twitter only impacted a very small percentage of the population who use the platform, and discussions about the shutdown could take place only after internet service was restored. Finally, participants noted that neither the ISPs nor the government weretransparent about the shutdown and there were not enough investigations, reporting, or other kinds of public information. As one participant put it, "2020 was the first shutdown in Tanzania, and it came as something new that people haven't experienced, hence they were not sure what was really going on since no one gave feedback from the government nor providers on what really happened."

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Workshop participants were asked specifically to discuss their challenges in determining whether an internet shutdown is intentional or a technical problem. Participants again noted that connections are often unstable, and "so it is not a new thing for the connection to go off." Others also noted that there are differences between internet users who access 2G, 3G, and 4G, so "sometimes it can lead to people thinking it's because of what they are using and not a shutdown." Several participants engaged in an extended discussion about whether there is really a difference between an intentional shutdown and a technical issue "because they are cut off in either sense." Additionally, participants expressed a lack of understanding about whether ISPs are able to shut down the internet without receiving an order from the government, and they noted a lack of transparency when it comes to the publication of government orders. Other participants described "an education gap" and noted that civil society does not have the technical expertise to measure and analyze internet shutdowns.

> **"I think it's an education gap. People do not have the technical knowledge of ways or how one can tell if it's a technical or government order. There is also no openness from authorities and relevant bodies."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

As part of the assessment of knowledge about past internet shutdowns, respondents were also asked a series of questions about the technical mechanisms through which internet shutdowns have occurred in the past. Shutdowns can impact either mobile or broadband internet access (or both), they can target specific geographic regions or municipalities, they can block specific communication platforms and social media services or restrict internet services by throttling bandwidth. The technical means by which the government restricts internet access significantly impacts potential advocacy approaches and circumvention techniques.
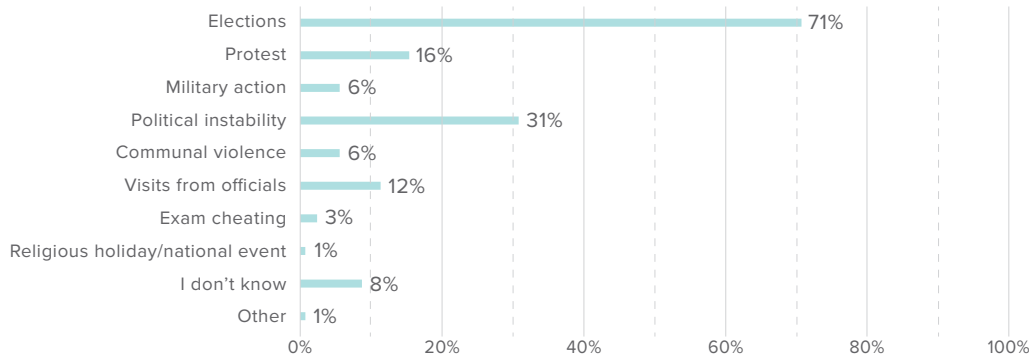
How frequently has the government slowed down the internet where you live?
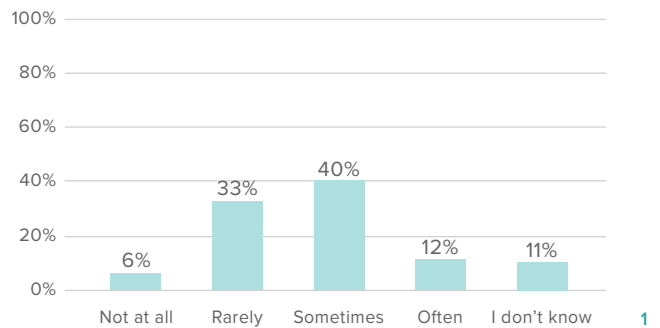
What do you believe the reasons have been for the government to shut down the internet? (Select all that apply)


[1] N=101

[2] N=138

The majority of respondents (64%) reported that past shutdowns have targeted both mobile and broadband networks. When asked if the government blocks social media networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, about half (51%) of the respondents reported that the government blocks these platforms sometimes or often, and the other half (46%) said that the government uses this tactic rarely or never. When asked about the government's record of throttling or intentionally slowing down the internet, there was disagreement amongst respondents. A plurality (40%) reported that the government "sometimes" throttles the internet, while 33% reported that this "rarely" occurs.

Respondents were also asked to select the reasons they believe the government shut down the internet in the past. Many (71%) respondents attributed previous shutdowns to elections, followed by political instability (31%), protests (16%), and visits from officials (12%).

Related to this general disagreement and lack of understanding about different kinds of internet shutdowns, the survey asked respondents to describe their level of understanding about how a shutdown occurs technically and

legally. Almost half of the respondents (49%) reported that while they are familiar with Internet shutdowns, they do not understand how they occur technically or legally. Only 27% of respondents consider themselves to be experts on shutdowns, and 20% report that they do not know much about the topic.

Do you know what an internet shutdown is?
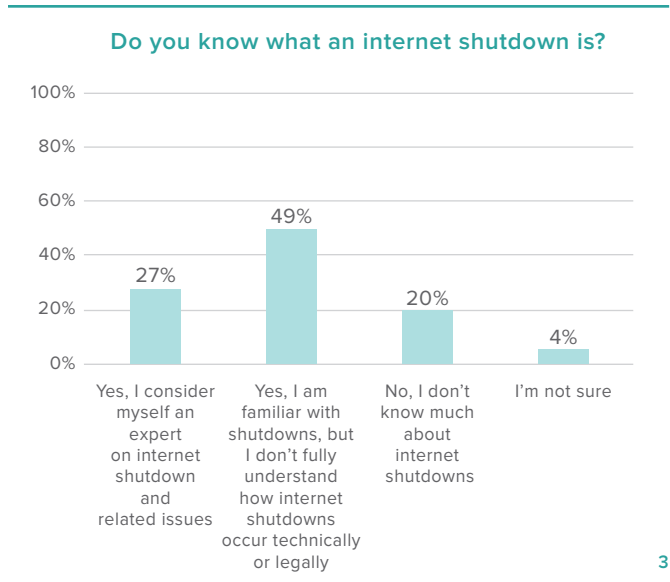
3

To your knowledge, has there been an internet shutdown where you live?
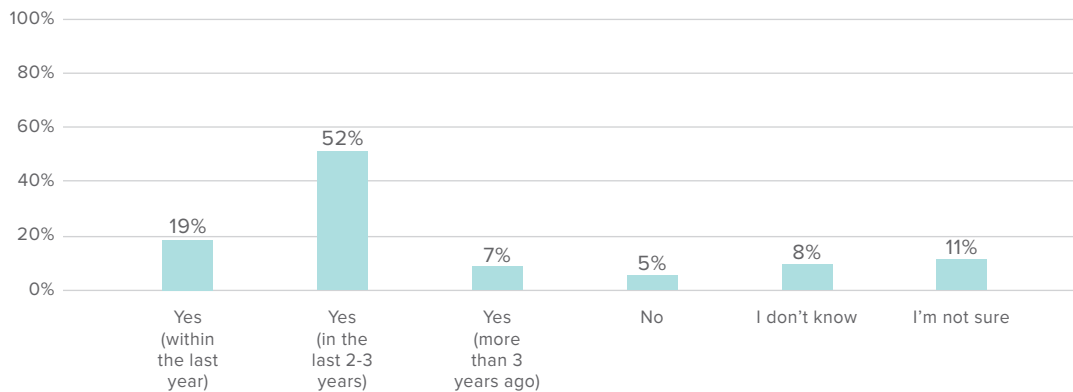
4

[3] N=137

[4] N=132

Impact of Past Shutdowns

Following questions about past experiences of shutdowns, respondents were asked a set of questions about the social, political, economic, and personal impact of internet shutdowns. These questions were expanded upon during focus group discussions.

> **"I work at a Marketing Agency and most of our work is on using digital platforms for marketing products for clients. During the shutdown we had to shut down the office since we couldn't do any work. And most of us are youth, relying on jobs that use mostly the internet."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

A large majority (74%) of respondents reported that businesses that rely on the internet are most affected by internet shutdowns. When asked specifically about how shutdowns impact their everyday lives, a majority of respondents (74%) also reported that internet shutdowns prevent them from doing their jobs and about half (48%) directly stated that shutdowns prevent them from conducting business and making money online.

During focus group discussions, participants described the widespread economic impacts of internet shutdowns in the country, impacting ISPs, digital service providers and internet companies, businesses that communicate with customers and clients through the internet, nonprofits and CSOs missing donor communications and losing out on funding, and lost government tax revenue. In focus group discussions with young content creators and entrepreneurs, participants stated that they were greatly impacted by internet shutdowns as they rely on social media to advertise their work and interact with clients, vendors, and audiences. As one participant noted, it was not only e-commerce and online service businesses that suffered, but any business or nonprofit that relies on communicating with clients, customers, or suppliers. They noted, "people who do export

and import business, buying and selling goods from other countries such as China, were greatly impacted; some even lost their products due to miscommunication."

Considering that Tanzania's internet shutdown in 2020 occurred around the election, respondents and focus group participants were also asked about the impact of the shutdown on political processes and democratic functioning. A majority of respondents (58%) felt internet shutdowns significantly impact protesters/political parties/activists.

A majority (67%) said such cutoffs personally impacted their ability to receive vital news and information, and another 20% reported that the shutdown specifically prevented them from personally working on campaigns or engaging in activism. According to workshop participants, the lack of transparency caused by the shutdown made it impossible for the elections to be considered "free and fair." They described how political candidates and activists alike couldn't use social media as they had planned for campaigns and get-out-the-vote efforts.
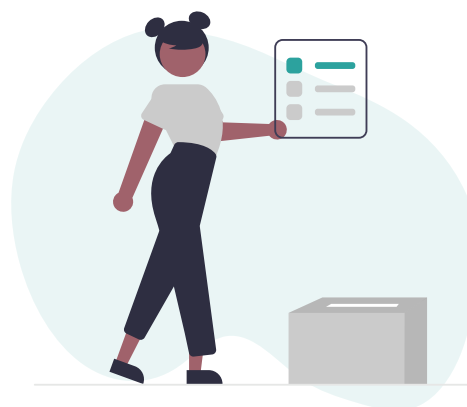
As one participant put it, "One of the principles of democracy is a free and fair election. Now, when there is no transparency because we cannot follow the election in real time, then there are no free and fair elections anymore, impacting democracy negatively." Another participant described "leading an online campaign to provide voters education" and being unable to "deliver that because there was no connection."

A journalist described "reporting in a conflicted region and I could not share real-time information with groups of journalists on what was happening at that time." Another workshop participant was a candidate in the election and believed the internet shutdown contributed to their loss as they were unable to have "communication with my party and gain access to information."
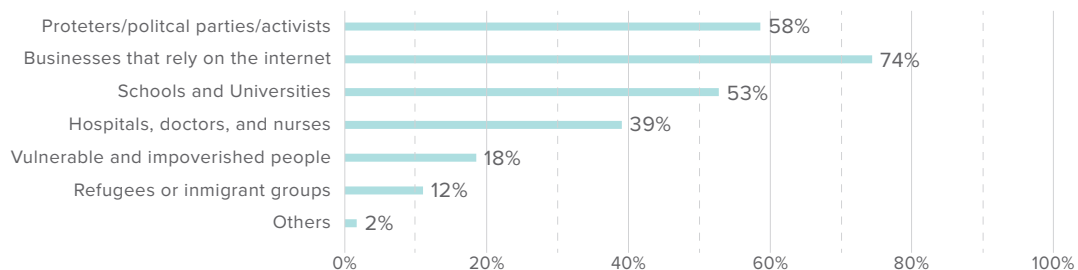
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> "At that time [of the October 2020 election], I was a candidate running for the position of a district councilor. I couldn't communicate with my party and gain access to information. As candidates, we missed important information. I feel this contributed greatly to my not winning the election. This did not promote democracy at all."

-Workshop participant, 2022

Survey respondents were also asked how the internet shutdown impacted other sectors of society. About half (53%) said that schools and universities were impacted, 39% reported the shutdown affected hospitals/doctors/nurses, and 57% said it cut off communications with friends and family. Participants were asked in focus group sessions to reflect on how the shutdown impacted individuals' abilities to communicate, to stay safe and healthy, and to support friends and family. Participants spoke of the trauma and uncertainty of not being able to access information and communicate in real time during a contentious election and thus not knowing if it was safe to leave their homes and travel. The inability to communicate with family, especially family outside the country, was a particular point of anxiety for many participants. One participant described being unable to communicate with their child's doctor for an important scheduled operation.

In your opinion, which groups are most impacted by an internet shutdown? (Select all that apply)

Group	Percentage
Proteters/politcal parties/activists	58%
Businesses that rely on the internet	74%
Schools and Universities	53%
Hospitals, doctors, and nurses	39%
Vulnerable and impoverished people	18%
Refugees or inmigrant groups	12%
Others	2%

5

[5] N=137

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> **"My child was sick, and I was supposed to send a scan of my child to a doctor in Dar [es Salaam] to get an opinion on whether the child needed an operation or not. But without the internet, I had to travel all the way to Dar to hand deliver the scan to the doctor."**
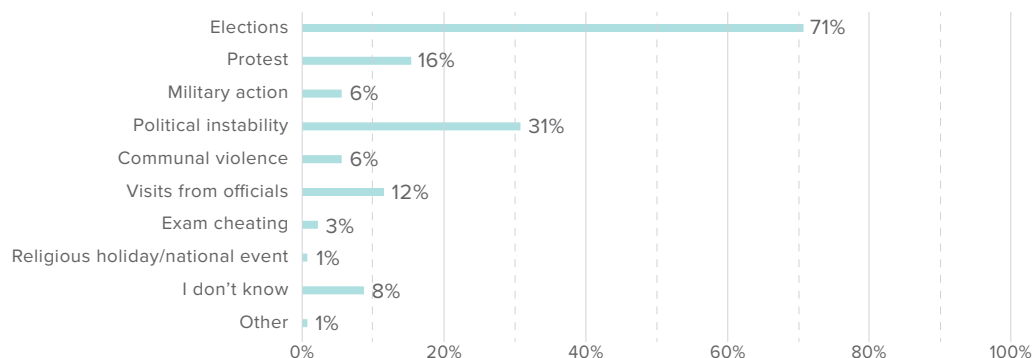>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

Only a few survey respondents indicated that shutdowns significantly impact marginalized and vulnerable groups (18%) and refugees/migrants (12%). Several participants in the focus groups work for organizations and represent people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups such as the poor, rural women, and unemployed youth. These participants argued that during the 2020 shutdown, people with disabilities, especially the deaf, were hugely impacted because "they use different means of accessing information due to differing abilities hence their democratic rights to vote and be informed were curtailed with the event of the shutdown."

Participants also described the acute impact on young people, who disproportionately use the internet and rely on the internet for work and business as well as for online classes. Other participants described known experiences of women who sell their products through online stores who were prevented from making income. One female entrepreneur stated that the internet shutdown blocked her access to markets, "since social media is the main mode of showcasing products and then interacting with clients."

> **"Vulnerable groups did not get a chance to practice their democratic right since they couldn't access information. This was especially true for the deaf since they rely on text updates found mostly on social media."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

What do you believe the reasons have been for the government to shut down the internet? (Select all that apply)

Reason	Percentage
Elections	71%
Protest	16%
Military action	6%
Political instability	31%
Communal violence	6%
Visits from officials	12%
Exam cheating	3%
Religious holiday/national event	1%
I don't know	8%
Other	1%

6

[6] N=138

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Risks of Future Shutdowns and Censorship

In addition to past shutdown experiences and knowledge, respondents were asked to answer questions assessing the likelihood of future shutdowns in Tanzania. Almost half (49%) reported that they did not know or were not sure if Tanzania would experience an internet shutdown in the next three years. Only 20% indicated that it is likely or very likely that a shutdown will occur in Tanzania in the next three years. On that timeframe, it is important to note that almost the same number of respondents said a shutdown was likely or very likely as said it was very unlikely (19% for each).

Focus group participants were asked to reflect on this finding and discuss the reasons for such differentials. Participants' differing responses on whether they anticipated a shutdown largely pivoted on speculation about the new president and her commitment to democratic freedoms. Some respondents asserted that a shutdown during the next election is less likely, as the president has called for greater freedoms for media and for civil society. Another set of respondents disagreed, noting that the current ruling party is the same party "that kept silent about the shutdown" and that the next election will also be contentious and therefore likely lead to a shutdown

As shutdown activity began in Tanzania in the runup to the 2020 presidential election, workshop participants agreed that it is crucial to think about risk during future elections to prepare for potential shutdown activity and to spread awareness. The next presidential election in Tanzania will occur in 2025, and regional and municipal elections will occur in 2024. Respondents were asked if they were concerned that internet shutdowns might occur around elections, and if so, which elections. A plurality (40%) reported that they worry an internet shutdown will occur around an election within the next two years, with another 31% indicating that they are concerned about shutdowns occurring around an election in the next four years.

In focus groups, participants were asked about specific regions or municipalities that might be more likely to experience internet shutdowns around elections. A few noted that Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Zanzibar, and Kilimanjaro were most likely to experience shutdowns due to violence or conflict. Some participants specifically highlighted risk in both Arusha and Zanzibar, which are key opposition strongholds that have experienced previous incidents of violence around elections.
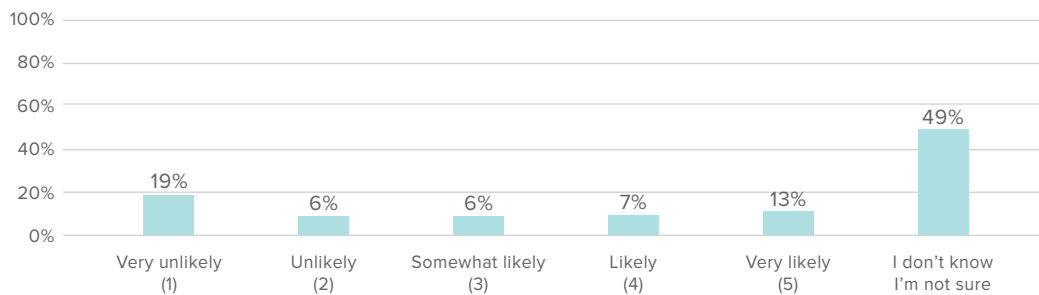
> **"I don't think there will be a
> shutdown because the president
> is really doing great work."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

> **"The current government still has
> the same key figures in office,
> so I don't think much will change."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

How likely do you think it is that the government shuts down the Internet in Tanzania in the next 3 years?

Very unlikely (1)	Unlikely (2)	Somewhat likely (3)	Likely (4)	Very likely (5)	I don't know I'm not sure
19%	6%	6%	7%	13%	49%

[7]

Legal Context, Operating Environment and Constraints to Advocacy

Leading up to the 2020 general election, President Magufuli enacted a series of laws aimed at restricting the ability of journalists, CSOs, and citizens to openly share information in an effort to tighten the information ecosystem and suppress opposition. Survey respondents were asked if the laws in the country make it easier for the government to censor and shut down the internet. Most respondents (65%) reported that laws in Tanzania make it easier for the government to shut down the internet or censor online content. Of the remaining respondents, only 11% stated that laws do not make it easier for the government to shut down the internet or censor online content. An additional 25% indicated that they were not sure or had a neutral opinion on whether laws in Tanzania make it easier for the government to shut down the internet or censor online content.

To follow up, workshop and focus group participants were asked to discuss how laws allow the government to legally justify shutdown activity.

> **"I am not sure if there is a law specifically talking of enabling shutdowns but i think most matters are termed as national security hence that act can be used to make such decisions"**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

Participants specifically were asked to discuss the amendments to the Electronic and Postal Communications Act (2020) and the Cybercrimes Act (2015) and noted that these laws make it much easier for the government to censor online content. Participants also debated whether there is clear legislation that legally allows for internet shutdowns, and there was some confusion on the subject. As one participant described, "I am not sure if there is a law specifically talking of enabling shutdowns, but I think most matters are considered national security, hence that act can be used to make such decisions."

[8] N=130

In order to better understand additional risks or constraints to civil society groups working on preventing internet shutdowns, respondents were asked to rate how easy or difficult it is for civil society in Tanzania to operate safely and engage in advocacy. The majority (54%) of respondents reported that it is somewhat difficult, and that civil society is impeded by laws, norms, and government threats. The rest of the respondents were divided, with a quarter (24%) indicating that it is easy or very easy for civil society to operate unimpeded and another quarter (23%) describing the operating environment as either very difficult or difficult.

Do you think laws in Tanzania make it easier for the government to suspend the internet or censor online content?

18
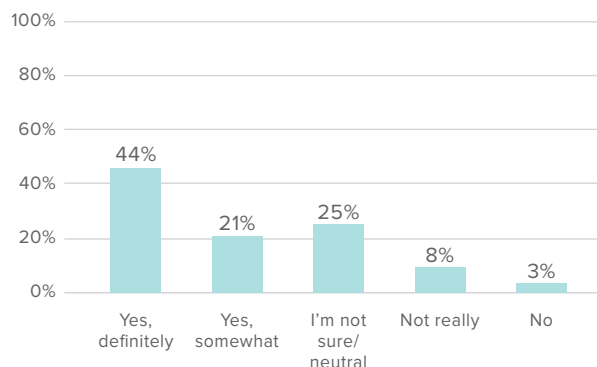
Workshop participants were asked about constraints facing civil society and challenges when it comes to engaging in advocacy. Participants discussed how, due to the recent history of government crackdowns, there is little trust between the government and civil society and that the government often views CSOs as opponents. Participants also said civil society is often accused of being funded by donors, pushing foreign agendas, and "viewed to not be patriotic." While they described collaboration with the government as limited, they did note that there seem to be more opportunities to engage under the new president.

also disagreed about whether these laws would be reformed under the new president. While some participants thought it was possible, most did not expect significant changes before the 2025 election.

> **"CSO's are often viewed as opponents and critics of the Government hence this makes it difficult for them to freely operate and more especially advocate against internet shutdowns"**
>
> **-Workshop participant, 2022**

> **"The current government is open to listen to public opinions, so it's possible for this to be brought forward and heard by the government."**
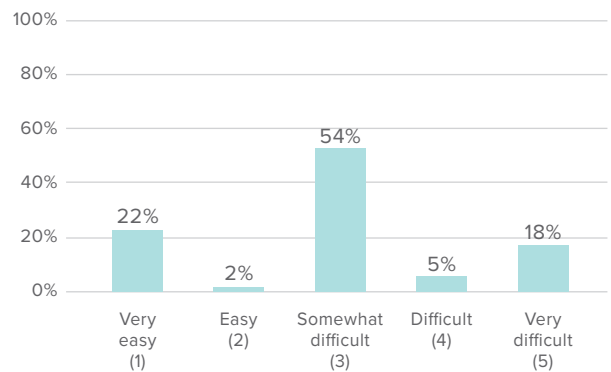>
> **-Workshop participant, 2022**

Workshop and focus group participants additionally discussed specific laws that were passed or amended in the last few years that have significantly impacted the ability of civil society groups to operate. One of those laws, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Act, put in place strict requirements for registration for NGOs, reporting, and project documentation. It gave the Registrar of NGOs broad powers to suspend organizations and investigate their operations. Several prominent civil society groups were de-registered and others were forced to change their names. Another Magufuli-era legal change, an amendment to the Statistics Act, made it extremely difficult to conduct research and made it illegal to publish data that contradicts official government statistics. During focus group discussions, the majority of the participants said NGOs located in Dar es Salaam and in Dodoma were most often targeted because the central government has more of a presence there. Participants

How easy is it in Tanzania for civil society groups to operate safely & engage in advocacy?

22%	2%	54%	5%	18%
Very easy (1)	Easy (2)	Somewhat difficult (3)	Difficult (4)	Very difficult (5)

[9]

⁹ N=131

Civil Society Preparedness and Capacity

To assess the capacities and needs of civil society to respond to future internet shutdowns, survey respondents were asked a series of questions about civil society preparedness during the 2020 internet shutdowns. Respondents who answered that they had previously experienced an internet shutdown were asked how prepared they were personally during the last shutdown in Tanzania.

Only 20% said they were prepared or very prepared, while 17% were somewhat prepared, and 64% indicated that they were unprepared or very unprepared.

Focus group and workshop participants elaborated on their personal experiences during the shutdown. Many said they had not expected it because it was the first in Tanzania, and that they were "not widely educated on what was happening and how we would be able to get connected again."

> **"Some organizations led campaigns to educate people ahead of elections about internet shutdowns and what to do in the event that a shutdown occurs; however, the majority were very unprepared and didn't know how to respond."**
>
> -**Workshop participant, 2022**

These same survey respondents were also asked about the degree of preparation of Tanzania's civil society as a whole for the 2020 shutdown. Again, the majority (65%) of respondents reported that civil society was unprepared or very unprepared to confront the shutdown, and a quarter (24%) rated it somewhat unprepared. Only 12% indicated that civil society was prepared or very prepared. These findings suggest a clear need to bolster civil society preparedness for future shutdowns.

Workshop and focus group participants discussed the shutdown-related activities that civil society had engaged in

before the 2020 shutdown. A few participants described one situation in which they knew of an organization that had "tried ahead of elections to prepare citizens for the possibility of a shutdown," but that, largely, most civil society organizations lacked the knowledge they needed to do advocacy and didn't expect one to happen. As one participant explained, "Some organizations led campaigns

You indicated that the government has previously shut down the Internet. In your opinion, how prepared were you presonally for the shutdown?
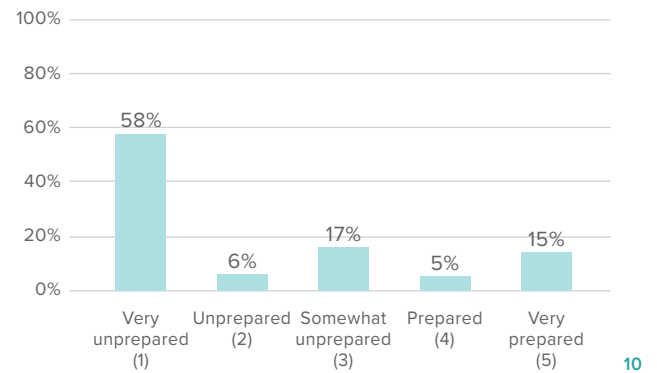
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You indicated that the government has previously shut down the Internet. In your opinion, how prepared were you presonally for the shutdown?
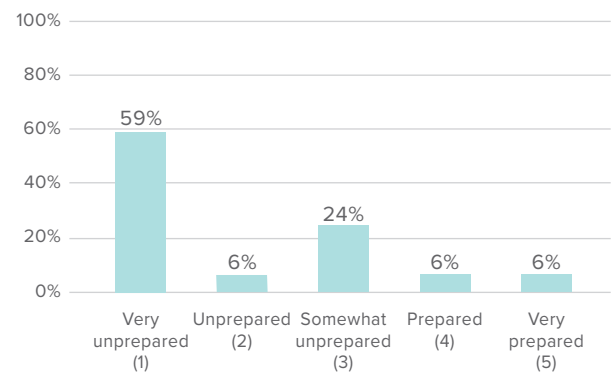
11

10 N=101

11 N=100

to educate people ahead of elections about internet shutdowns and what to do in the event a shutdown occurs; however, the majority were very unprepared and didn't know how to respond." Participants noted that after the shutdown, more CSOs "spoke against it and condemned the government."

In addition to questions related to past shutdowns, survey respondents were asked about current civil society capacity to conduct internet shutdown advocacy. When asked specifically about CSO capacity to campaign to stop an ongoing shutdown that might happen in the future, a large majority (69%) of the respondents felt that civil society has limited or no such capacity. Only 18% reported that civil society has a great deal of capacity to secure an end to a cutoff. When asked about civil society's capacity to prevent a future shutdown, about half (52%) of respondents assessed that civil society has little or no capacity to engage in this kind of preventative advocacy. Again, 18% reported that they see a great deal of capacity for prevention.

> **"The key thing is capacity -- we need to be trained and made aware of the dynamics of internet shutdowns, and how to respond and even address shutdowns."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

In the workshop, participants were presented with these findings and asked to reflect on civil society's general needs for building capacity to better prepare for and prevent shutdowns. Participants said CSOs first need to build their own general knowledge base about internet shutdowns, how and why they happen, and how to develop effective advocacy narratives and tactics. As one participant articulated, "The key thing is capacity -- they need to be trained and made aware of the dynamics of internet shutdowns, and how to respond and even address shutdowns." Participants noted that activities and conversation about internet shutdowns cannot only start right before an election or potential shutdown, and that

there is a need to start this advocacy in advance and in a longer-term, ongoing way. In particular, participants described a need to better monitor internet outages to document future shutdowns and hold the government accountable.

> **"They need to do advocacy as early as now to stay ahead of a possible shutdown in the future to educate masses and keep records of all forms of shutdowns."**
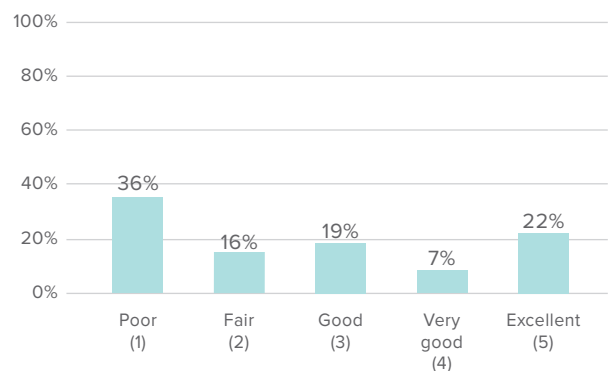>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

How would you rate civil society's capacity to build and anti-shutdown campacign to STOP an ongoing shutdown?
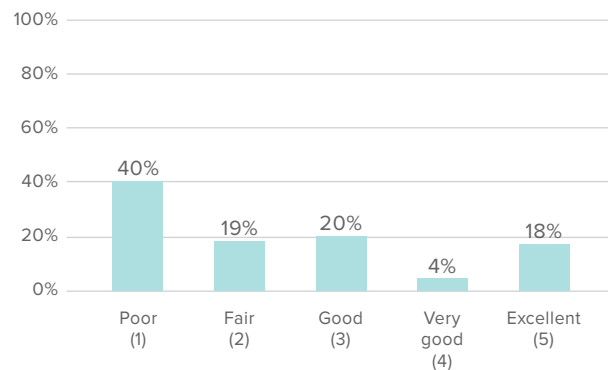
12

How would you rate civil society's capacity in Tanzania to build anti-shutdown campaigns to PREVENT a future shutdown?

13

[12] N=131

[13] N=134

Internet Shutdown Advocacy Skills

Following general questions about the advocacy capacity of civil society, the survey sought similar responses about specific advocacy skills, including expertise on tools and methods to circumvent different kinds of internet shutdowns, how to collect and analyze network data to document cutoffs, how to build legal strategies and engage in strategic litigation, and how to develop advocacy strategies and outreach targeting key stakeholders.

Censorship circumvention tools & strategies

When an internet shutdown occurs, various tools can be used, depending on the kind of shutdown, to technically "circumvent" the censorship for access to online content and to use blocked communication platforms. However, not all forms of internet shutdowns can be easily circumvented, and therefore it is also important to understand the non-technical strategies that people use to communicate and share information during a shutdown. In addition, as s d circumvention tools are specifically illegal in Tanzania, questions about legal fears related to theirare particularly relevant.

> **"People were selling VPNs, and at the time seeing them being sold at approximately $10 to $15 made me change my mind about them."**
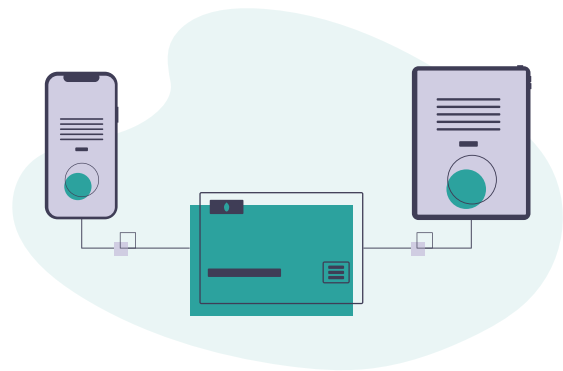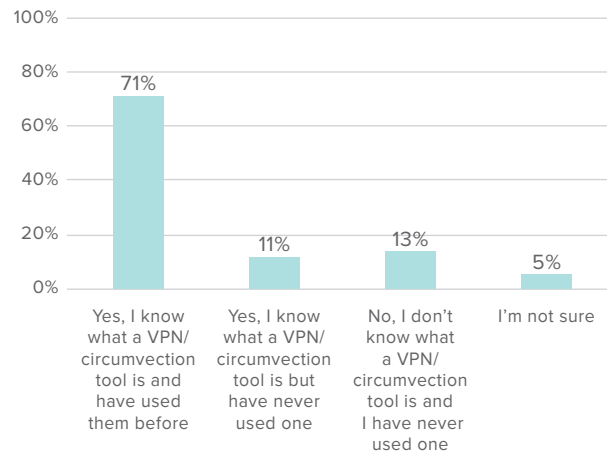>
> **-Workshop participant, 2022**

When asked about knowledge and usage of VPNs and circumvention tools, the majority (71%) of respondents

reported that they have knowledge of VPNs and have used them before. An additional 11% reported that they know what VPNs are but have never used them before. Only 13% reported not knowing about these tools or said they never used them.

During focus group discussions, participants said many vendors tried to sell VPNs to people before the 2020 election, and that many people did not understand what VPNs would allow them to do. Thus, when the shutdown

happened, many people thought they could "fix" the issue by "paying $5 to a technician" who installed a VPN service. This also led to confusion about whether the access cutoff was due to a government-ordered internet shutdown or a specific downloaded VPN was not working.

Do you know what a VPN or circumvention tool is used for and have you personally used any VPNs or circumvention tools before?

Bar chart showing:
- Yes, I know what a VPN/circumvection tool is and have used them before: 71%
- Yes, I know what a VPN/circumvection tool is but have never used one: 11%
- No, I don't know what a VPN/circumvention tool is and I have never used one: 13%
- I'm not sure: 5%

15

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Respondents were also asked which of a selection of VPNs and circumvention tools they are familiar with or have used. The most-used circumvention method reported was "using SMS when the internet is blocked," with 90% of respondents saying that they are familiar or partly familiar with using SMS as a way to communicate during a shutdown. The next most-selected answer was "other VPNs, with 82%. Other circumvention tools that respondents report using are the Tor Browser (51%), Psiphon (39%), and Tunnelbear (25%). An additional 29% reported at least some familiarity with using international SIM cards to circumvent a shutdown.

In focus group discussions, participants noted that there are a wide range of VPNs available and used in Tanzania that are not promoted by the human rights community, including paid tools such as NordVPN and ExpressVPN. They said Psiphon was frequently advertised by local advocacy groups in the runup to the election and that both Psiphon and Tor were made available in the Kiswahili language. Participants also said many people don't understand the security aspects of VPNs, the capacities of different kinds of phones, the differences between paid and free tools, and laws such as EPOCA 2020 that indirectly prohibits the use of tools such as VPNs (see legal section in Background above).

**How familiar are you with using these circumvention tools?**

Yes Partly No

16
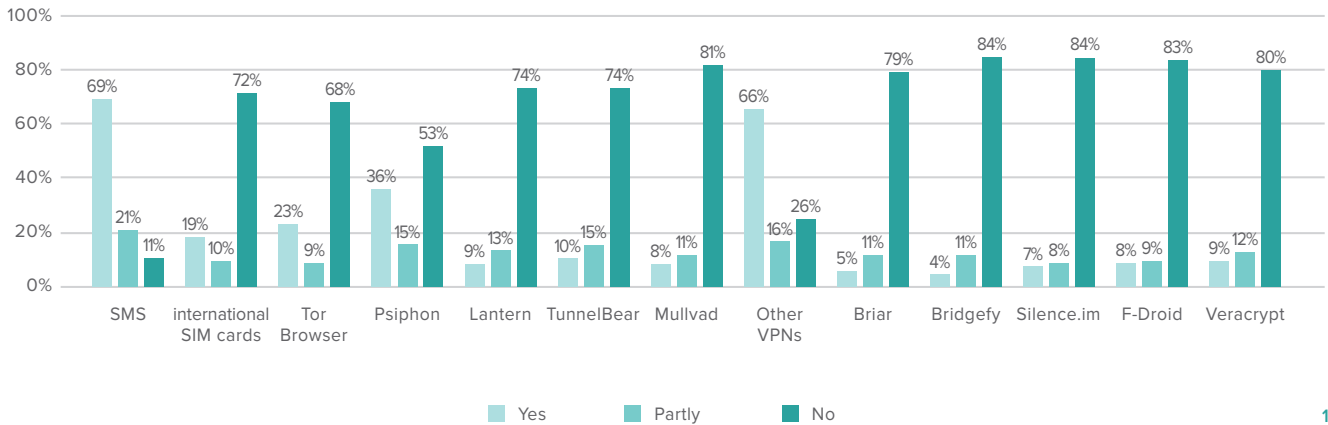
Survey respondents were also asked specifically whether they had any fears about using VPNs and other circumvention tools. Almost half (48%) of participants said they did have fears, while 36% said that they do not worry about using VPNs and other such tools. Another 17% said they were not sure. (The survey didn't specify the kinds of fears.)

In focus group discussions, participants noted a lack of understanding and clarity related to the illegality of VPNs in Tanzania. Some said they believed the law only makes it illegal to access specific content the government has blocked, not that VPN use is illegal generally. Some participants described seeing posters warning people that VPNs are illegal. Others described technical challenges and confusion about downloading VPNs as well as the high cost of advertised VPNs. Several other participants described wanting to download a VPN once the internet was shut down and that of course they couldn't successfully access these tools at that point.

Do you have any fears about using VPNs/circumvention tools?

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

17%
48%
36%
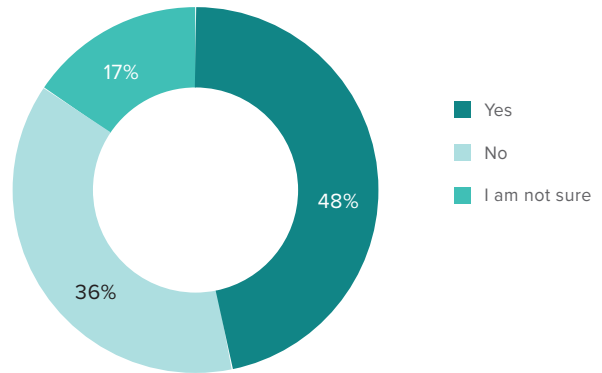
17

"**During elections some posters were spread, supposedly from TCRA, saying that VPNs were illegal, so I was afraid and didn't install it.**"

-**Workshop participant, 2022**
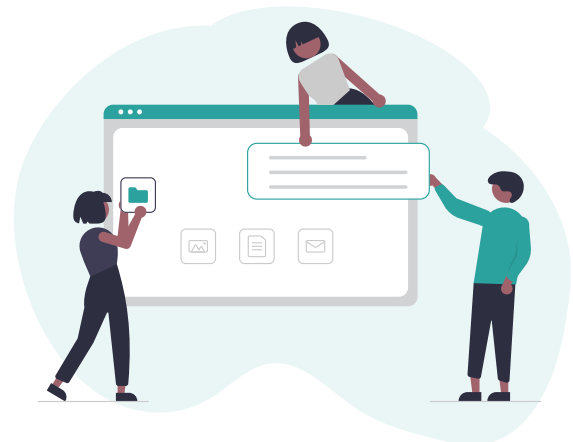
[17] N=137

Research and Network Measurement Capacity

Respondents were asked to assess civil society's capacity Respondents were also asked to assess civil society's capacity to document internet shutdowns by collecting technical data related to network disruptions and network performance. This kind of technical data collection is extremely important for advocacy work, as it provides evidence advocates can use to hold the government accountable even if shutdown orders are not published. It also supplies journalists with empirical and quantitative information to better report on internet shutdowns, and it is used by lawyers in efforts to fight shutdowns in courts. International advocacy coalitions also use such data for digital-rights advocacy.
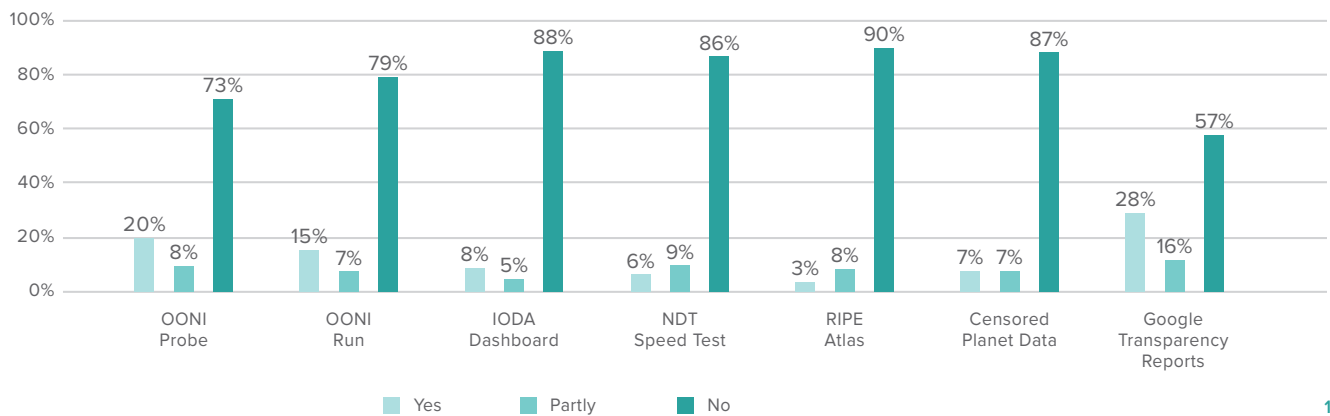
When survey respondents were asked to rate civil society's capacity to collect technical data and measure internet shutdowns, respondents were divided. More than half (56%) rated Tanzanian civil society's network measurement capacity as limited to nonexistent (1 or 2 out of 5), while a quarter (24%) rated it high or very high (4 or 5).

Most participants in the workshop focus group said the capacity to collect and analyze technical data is low and that there are just a handful of CSOs conducting measurements, along with the TCRA and ISPs. Participants also cited a need for training on how to collect data on shutdowns and how to then use this evidence in advocacy.

Respondents were asked specifically about knowledge and familiarity with the most common network measurement tools and resources. Most respondents reported that they were unfamiliar with every network measurement resource listed. The most familiar resources were Google Transparency Reports (28%), OONI Probe (20%), and OONI Run (15%).

In the workshop focus groups, participants who had some experience with network measurement pointed out that they mostly only use OONI to detect shutdowns and identify censorship. In terms of needs for training, participants said journalists need to be trained to understand technical data so they can incorporate it into

How familiar are you with using the following measurement tools/datasets?

	OONI Probe	OONI Run	IODA Dashboard	NDT Speed Test	RIPE Atlas	Censored Planet Data	Google Transparency Reports
Yes	20%	15%	8%	6%	3%	7%	28%
Partly	8%	7%	5%	9%	8%	7%	16%
No	73%	79%	88%	86%	90%	87%	57%

[18]

[18] Respondent numbers varied from 118 to 131

their reporting on shutdowns. A few participants suggested that social media influencers and digital creators could also be trained to understand this data and report shutdowns that might occur in the future.

In addition to survey questions that addressed network measurement research and analysis, respondents were asked to rate the capacity of civil society to document the socio-economic impact of internet shutdowns. Half of the respondents rated civil society's capacity to document shutdown impact as poor or low (1 or 2 on Likert scale), a quarter rated it as good (3), and another quarter rated capacity as high or very high (4 or 5).

In focus groups, participants discussed the need for this kind of impact research in order to communicate to government officials about why internet shutdowns are a disproportionate, ineffective, and costly endeavor. Better research on the impact could lead to dialogue with different government officials, they said, especially during a time when there seems to be more openness and engagement between CSOs and government.

How would you rate civil society's capacity in Tanzania to collect technical data to measure and document Internet shutdowns?

- Poor (1): 34%
- Fair (2): 32%
- Good (3): 21%
- Very good (4): 7%
- Excellent (5): 17%
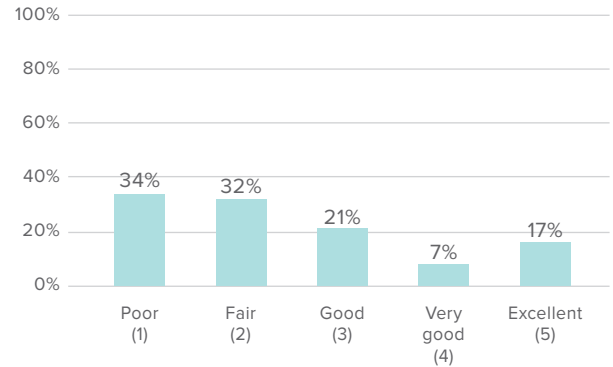
19

How would you rate civil society's capacity in Tanzania to use research to determine the impact of shutdowns on the economy and society?

- Poor (1): 28%
- Fair (2): 22%
- Good (3): 25%
- Very good (4): 9%
- Excellent (5): 16%
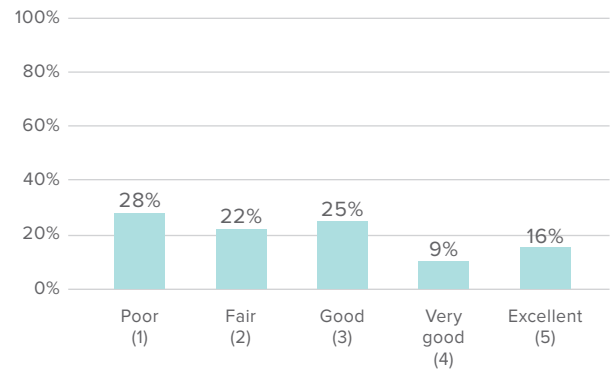
20

[19] N=131 (Average = 2.54)

[20] N=130 (Average = 2.65)

Legal Capacity and Strategic Litigation

Respondents were also asked about the capacity of civil society to work with lawyers and understand the legality of shutdowns and legal resources, as well as to use strategic litigation to fight internet shutdowns in court. When asked about legal capacity, slightly more than half of respondents (54%) stated that civil society has limited or no capacity to fight shutdowns in court and engage in strategic litigation. A quarter (27%) reported high or very high (4 or 5) legal capacity.

Workshop focus-group participants noted that there are few lawyers who understand internet shutdowns in Tanzania, and that they need basic awareness of the various forms of internet shutdowns. One participant noted that lawyers are influential as a stakeholder group and therefore "do have power to address the issue of internet shutdowns in court." However, other participants explained that there is little understanding about the laws and regulations that allow for shutdowns or about possible legal avenues to fight such actions.

How would you rate civil society's capacity in Tanzania to fight shutdowns in court and engage in strategic litigation?

Category	Percentage
Poor (1)	30%
Fair (2)	24%
Good (3)	20%
Very good (4)	10%
Excellent (5)	17%
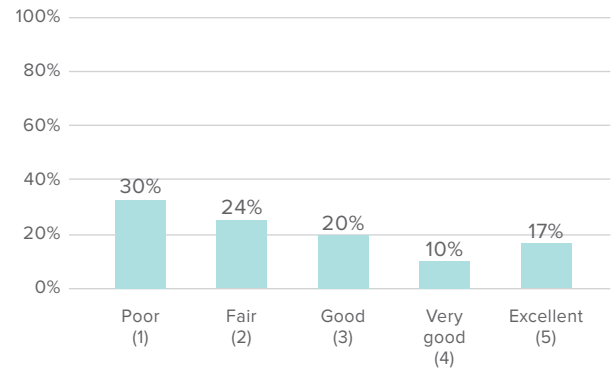
[21]

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[21] N = 130 (Average = 2.62)

Supporting and Engaging Marginalized and Vulnerable Communities During Shutdowns

When the internet or key online services and platforms are suddenly shut down, marginalized and vulnerable communities can be inordinately or diversely impacted. Tanzania has a range of vulnerable communities, depending on the context, but they include targeted racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, refugee and migrant communities, low-income women, and others. It is important to understand the specific ways in which these communities rely on the internet and online platforms, and to better understand the impact of internet shutdowns on these groups, so that advocates can target support and engage these communities in advocacy.

Survey respondents were asked to rate civil society's capacity in Tanzania to support vulnerable communities during a shutdown. The majority (58%) viewed civil society as having limited or no capacity to support vulnerable communities during a shutdown. An additional 28% reported high or very high (4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5) capacity to support these groups.

In follow-up discussions during the workshop focus group, participants considered the groups that are most marginalized, the impact that shutdowns have on these communities, and the ways advocacy coalitions can provide better support. Participants particularly noted that women have less access to technology generally but might also rely on certain technologies for important activities, such as XXXX . Service cutoffs also particularly affect young people, who tend to be more reliant on the internet; people with disabilities who rely on the internet for key services; and rural communities who may be more disconnected ordinarily anyway and unaware of their rights in relation to the technology they do use. Some participants said very few CSOs focus on supporting vulnerable communities in the digital space, in part because many of these groups are assumed to have less access to technology and therefore less need. But one participant noted that these groups do indeed use the internet for important daily activities, even if they don't have regular and high-quality access, and that it

is important to understand what happens when "the little access they have is denied." Participants agreed that these groups in particular need education about their rights to internet access and opportunities to engage in advocacy. They also described the need for contextualized resources based on varying languages and levels of literacy. Participants described how there is a need to understand the unique challenges and barriers to access that these groups face during an internet shutdown and in everyday life in order to provide useful resources.

> **"People with disabilities are already left out when it comes to participation online… In the event of a shutdown even the little access they had is denied."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

How would you rate civil society's capacity in Tanzania to support vulnerable communities during a shutdown?
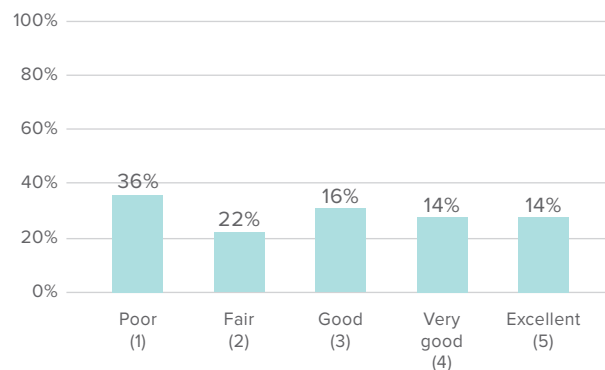
[22]

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[22] N = 133 (Average 2.49)

Capacity to Engage Key Stakeholders in Outreach and Advocacy

Advocacy to prevent or stop an internet shutdown requires a diverse coalition of stakeholders and the ability to engage and communicate the importance of shutdown prevention to many sectors of society. Survey respondents were asked to rate their perception of civil society's capacity to engage with other key actors, including ISPs and telecommunications companies, legislators, human rights groups, international NGOs, information ministries, and other relevant sectors like healthcare providers and educational institutions. The responses suggest that civil society engagement with many of these stakeholders is moderate to low. Respondents rated civil society as more able to engage with international organizations (rated 2.94/5 on average) and domestic human rights groups (rated 2.77), which are more traditionally involved in digital rights and internet-access advocacy coalitions. Respondents also reported some capacity to engage with other sectors such as healthcare, education, or the private sector (2.76). However, there is little reported capacity to engage with important stakeholders such as telecommunication providers and ISPs (2.45), legislators (2.65), and government authorities (2.67).

Workshop participants reflected on these findings, focusing particularly on those powerful but difficult-to-engage stakeholders. Participants agreed that there is a need to engage with government authorities now, to communicate the impact of internet shutdowns and to "avoid a repeat of 2020." While they noted that the atmosphere during the Hassan presidency has made it somewhat easier to engage government authorities, this remains a challenge. They also described how challenging it is to engage private-sector actors such as ISPs and telcos, as "they are more inclined to obey authority rather than question."
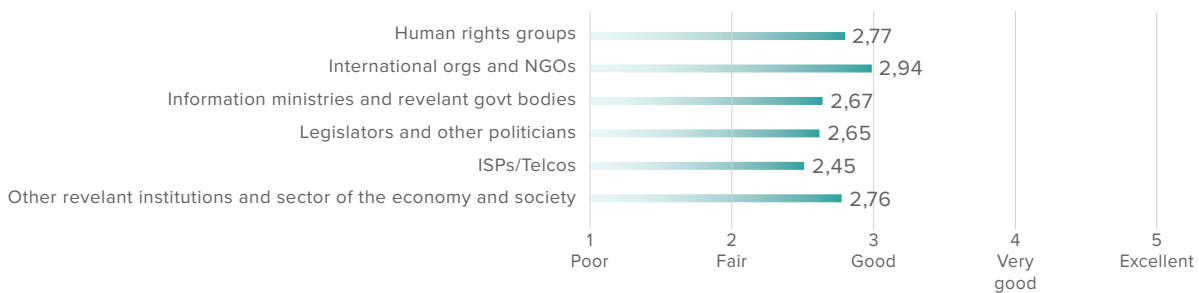
> **"ISP's are difficult to engage with. They hardly respond to queries raised by CSO's and are more inclined to obey authority rather than question, because to them it's all about business."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

> **"We need more collaboration with the government to avoid a repeat of what happened in 2020. They need to understand how shutdowns impact the country overall."**
>
> -Workshop participant, 2022

**CSO capacity in Tanzania to engage with stakeholder groups
(average rating: 1 = Poor; 2 = Fair; 3 = Good; 4 = Very good; 5 = Excellent)**

Stakeholder group	Rating
Human rights groups	2,77
International orgs and NGOs	2,94
Information ministries and revelant govt bodies	2,67
Legislators and other politicians	2,65
ISPs/Telcos	2,45
Other revelant institutions and sector of the economy and society	2,76

1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Very good	5 Excellent

23

[23] Respondent numbers varied from 129 to 132

Conclusion and Recommendations

This needs assessment sought to understand the nuanced ways in which internet shutdowns impact Tanzanian citizens and the challenges activists face in trying to prepare for, prevent, and respond to such occurrences. This includes considering the communities that have the potential to fight such cutoffs, and the opportunities that exist to better support advocacy on all these fronts.

As part of this research, workshop participants reflected on the research findings, the needs identified, and the areas of capacity, and were asked to collectively build a set of recommendations for a long-term and multi-sector advocacy campaign against internet shutdowns.

The key recommendations that emerged were the following:

• Provide training for key stakeholders so they can better anticipate, prepare, and prevent internet shutdowns. This means additional training, support, and resources on topics including raising public awareness about internet shutdowns, collecting and analyzing accurate and localized information on VPNs and circumvention tools, conducting strategic litigation and other potential advocacy strategies, developing knowledge and hands-on experience in collecting and analyzing technical network data and using it in advocacy and reporting, and increasing skills and funding for documenting the impact of shutdowns.

• Engage in research to better understand local attitudes and fears about using VPNs and other shutdown-circumvention tools. This should include studying the current use of VPNs across key groups such as journalists, youth, and vulnerable communities. The results of this research should then be used to produce more localized guides on how to use these tools during different shutdown scenarios.

• Support civil society in forming multi-stakeholder coalitions by reaching out to non-traditional partners such as ISPs, economic sectors, educational institutions, and health providers. There is a need to bring lawyers, journalists, and technologists (such as software developers, network engineers, etc.) into this advocacy, to draw on their different strengths to fight shutdowns. ISPs, for instance, incur major financial losses during shutdowns, hold significant power to resist government shutdown orders, can provide information to make shutdown processes more transparent, and have insights into the

economic impact of shutdowns on their customers. Such information would be valuable for public-education efforts via news media and for lawyers to use as evidence in their advocacy or, if needed, litigation.

• Train journalists, CSOs, and activists on collecting and analyzing network-measurement data for use in educating the public and in advocacy. There is a need to ensure that measurements are collected more regularly, and especially before, during, and after censorship occurs.

• Provide funding and training for CSOs on digital security tools and practices that they otherwise could not afford. This will help them better prepare to cope with and reduce the impact of internet shutdowns. Tools should include VPNs, international SIM cards, and educational materials on alternative ways to communicate during a shutdown.

• Offer support to vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and people living with disabilities, who often are disproportionately affected by internet shutdowns. They need to be equipped with an understanding of internet shutdowns, the circumvention tools they can use if applications are blocked, and resources that are useful for diverse literacy levels and languages.

• Develop legal and strategic advocacy expertise. Legal professionals need more knowledge about what internet shutdowns are and clearer understanding of the benefits of challenging government institutions involved in deliberate shutdowns in a court of law. Further, these professionals need training on how to work with groups collecting and analyzing network data, to incorporate the evidence in such litigation. Awareness of these issues also should be raised among the judiciary, because judges in other countries such as Zambia have in the past held officials accountable over government-ordered shutdowns.

• Help lawyers and researchers better understand the Electronic and Postal Communications Act. This will enable them to better able to articulate risks, advocate for less ambiguous and restrictive laws, and engage in strategic litigation as needed. Additional efforts should be made to understand how other laws (such the NGO registration law) impact the operating environment for civil society and the ability of coalitions to engage in advocacy related to internet shutdowns. It also may surface strategic opportunities that might emerge to reform these laws during the Hassan presidency.

• Ensure financial support for costs incurred in waging strategic litigation. That should include the purchase of digital security tools for legal professionals.

To help prepare communities in Tanzania for possible shutdowns and, ideally, to prevent them from happening at all will require improving capacities and skills of key individuals and organizations, such as lawyers, human rights defenders, CSOs, and media, among others. The gaps in capacity and resources are significant in Tanzania, because few civil society organizations work specifically on digital rights and the few that do are fairly new to the field, having been spurred by the shock of the 2020 election outages.

The current government's rhetorical gestures toward more openness and an easing of restrictions on civil society appears to offer a potential opening right now for crucial work on digital rights. Funders and supporters should look expeditiously for ways to build an enabling and level playing field for civil society and its allies to properly engage and act when shutdowns occur and ultimately to prevent such outages entirely.

Appendix

Research Methods and Respondent Demographics

The team conducted this community needs assessment to better understand the perspectives of Tanzanian civil society about the risk of future shutdowns and methods for engaging in strategic and preventive advocacy against future cutoffs. Participants included representatives from civil society, media, business, content creation, academia, and technology, among other stakeholder groups.

The study employed a mixed-method research approach, drawing on an initial survey, desk research, and focus groups. The research team designed and distributed a survey, with both closed and open-ended questions, to assess knowledge related to internet shutdowns, experiences during past cutoffs, understanding of future shutdown risk, and the needs and challenges that different stakeholders face in conducting advocacy on these issues.

The survey was distributed using snowball sampling, targeting specific participant groups from different fields, locations, and perspectives to ensure a diversity of responses and a holistic understanding of civil society community needs. The survey was web-based and distributed to each participant via email and encrypted messaging platforms. The option was given to answer the survey offline by phone or in person for those with limited internet access or literacy challenges. Survey responses were collected between March 1 and April 9, 2022, and most of the respondents submitted their responses electronically.

The Survey

The survey resulted in 140 unique responses. It asked a variety of questions about shutdown experience, knowledge, and potential capacity to prepare for, prevent, and respond to internet shutdowns. Respondents received slightly different questions based on their shutdown experience and professional background. All questions were optional, and respondents had the option to remain anonymous.

Focus Group

Along with the survey, a one-hour focus group discussion was conducted with a group of 10 content creators composed of graphic designers, website designers, and digital-marketing professionals. All were youth -- 60% women and 40% men --who rely heavily on social media to reach their customers. This group was brought together specifically to better understand how frequent internet users were impacted by the 2020 shutdown and their vulnerabilities, needs, and capacities for advocacy against future shutdowns.

The Workshop

After initial analysis of the survey data, our research team held a workshop in Dodoma where additional focus group discussions were organized. Facilitators presented the survey findings and asked a series of questions to participants to reflect on and discuss the findings, articulate needs and capacities, and highlight points of disagreement. Following these discussions, participants also were asked to collectively determine key resource needs and advocacy goals.
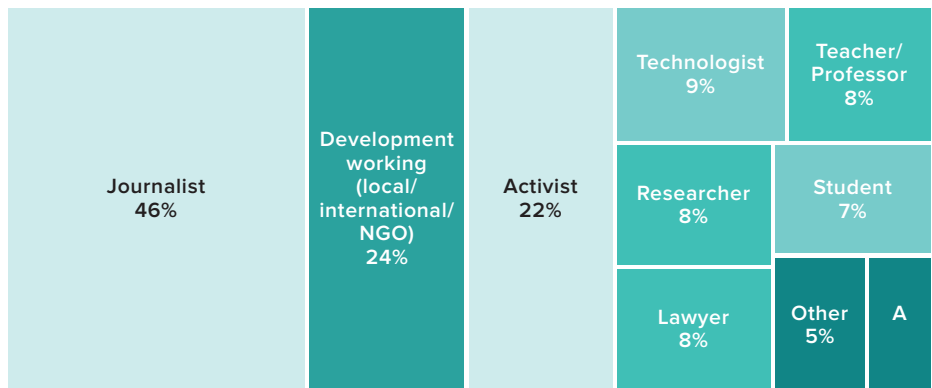
Demographics

Respondents were distributed across regions of the country, mainly Dar es Salaam (40%), Arusha (19%), Dodoma (13%), and Morogoro (5%). The respondents represented 14 unique regions. Of those who participated in the survey, 62% identified as female and 38% identified as male.

As noted above, the project deliberately aimed to reach diverse groups of stakeholders working across different fields and differentially impacted by internet shutdowns. To better understand the professions and expertise of those surveyed, we asked respondents to choose the professional categories that best describe their work. Respondents were able to choose more than one profession from 10 options as well as "other." Almost half of the respondents (46%) identified as journalists, while 24% identified as development workers (both local and international NGOs) and 22% identified as activists.

What region do you live in?

40%

1%

(N = 131)
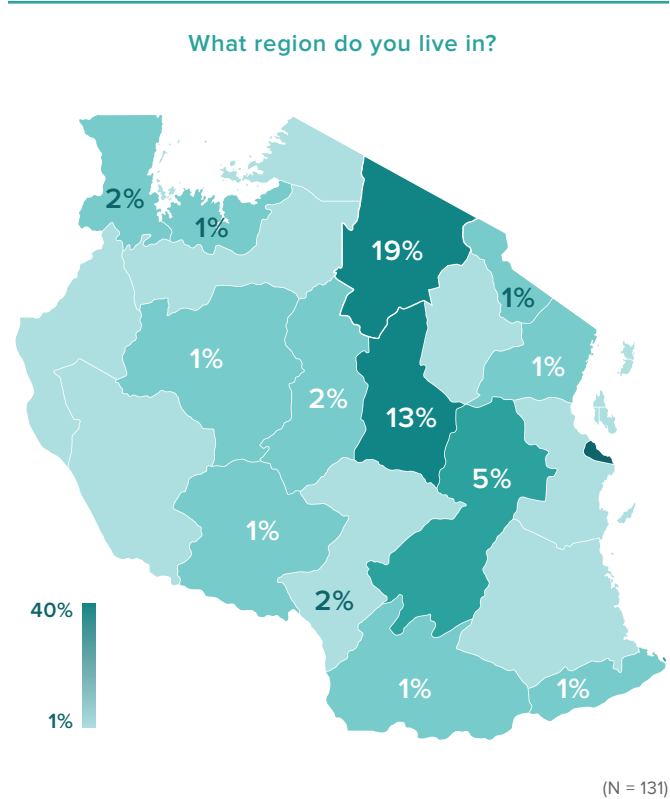
What best describes your profession? (Select all that apply)

(N = 140)
A - Business person in the private sector