



# Effectiveness of State-Imposed Internet Shutdowns as a Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Africa

Aaron Promise Mbah - NextGen@ICANN83



# Background and Context

## 01 Internet Shutdowns in Africa

The worst year in shutdown— 2024!, 296 shutdowns in 54 countries- 21 shutdowns in 15 African countries  
2023, **21 Internet shutdowns** were reported in Africa, contributing to a global total of **114**. These events are rising in frequency.

## 02 Purpose of Shutdowns

States employ shutdowns to **disrupt insurgent coordination**, combat **fake news**, and **suppress dissent**, often citing **national security**.

## 03 Ethiopia's Shutdown

Ethiopia experienced a **2-year shutdown** in the Tigray region during a civil conflict, severely impacting communication and information access.

## 04 Nigeria's Counter-Banditry

In 2021, Nigeria implemented shutdowns in Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina as part of a counter-banditry operation, affecting local communities.

## 05 Cameroon's Anglophone Region

Shutdowns in the Anglophone region of Cameroon were used during separatist tensions, illustrating the intersection of technology and conflict.

## 06 Debate on Necessity

Governments argue shutdowns are essential for **national security**, but the effectiveness and ethical implications remain contentious.

# Research Objectives



## Effectiveness of Internet Shutdowns

Assess how effective Internet shutdowns are in counter-terrorism efforts in African conflict zones.



## Community Impacts

Analyze the impacts on security, economy, and communication at the community level during shutdowns.



## Government vs. Citizen Narratives

Compare the narratives provided by governments with the actual experiences of citizens during shutdowns.



## Policy Alternatives

Propose alternatives that ensure a balance between security measures and citizens' rights.

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# Research Methodology: Qualitative multi- country case study

This approach allows for in-depth understanding of the complexities of Internet shutdowns across different contexts.

Semi-structured interviews with

1. Affected communities (local residents , businesses)
2. Security personnel (military, police, local vigilante groups)
3. Government policymakers and strategists)

Focus Group Discussions: Nigeria, Cameroon and Ethiopia

Document Analysis : Security reports, Internet shutdown logs, regional counter-terrorism frameworks



# Relevance of the Study

**Strategic Relevance to ICANN's Core Mandate (Security, Stability, Resilience of DNS, Globally interoperable Internet)**

**IS- DNS tampering, IP blackholing or BgP hijack**

**DNS Resolution Disruption, Fragmentation Risks (Splintering, IWN), Routing Instability**

**ICANN Strategic Objective 4.1 - Identify and mitigate threats to the DNS Infrastructure**

Evidence Based insights -

1. Distinguish legitimate concerns from repressive shutdowns
2. Strengthen advocacy for technical staffs that protects the DNS during political instability
3. Reinforces global norms against the weaponization of Internet infrastructure

# Timeline

## Phase 1: Planning Activities

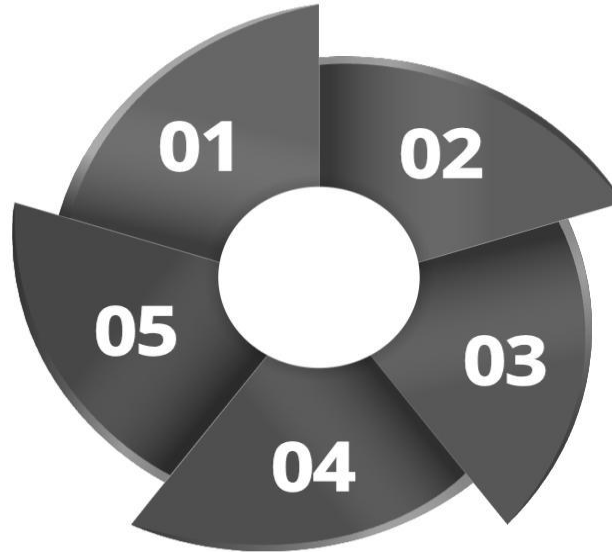
In this initial phase, we focus on **stakeholder mapping** and **tool design** to prepare for the project.

## Phase 5: Dissemination Activities

In the final phase, we prepare a **policy brief**, conduct **presentations**, and submit to **journals** for publication.

## Phase 4: Drafting Report

The focus shifts to **draft writing**, **review**, and engaging in **validation workshops** to finalize the report.



## Phase 2: Data Collection

This phase involves **fieldwork across 3 countries** to gather relevant data on internet shutdowns.

## Phase 3: Data Analysis

During this phase, we carry out **transcription**, **coding**, and **trend analysis** to interpret the collected data effectively.

# Expected Outputs



## **Comprehensive Research Report**

A detailed document summarizing the findings of the study on the effects of internet shutdowns in Africa and their implications on various sectors.



## **Policy Brief for African Union & National Governments**

A concise overview of recommendations aimed at policymakers to address the challenges posed by internet shutdowns in the region.



## **Infographics & Data Visualizations**

Visually engaging representations of data related to internet shutdowns, showcasing trends, statistics, and impacts on society.



## **Op-eds & Conference Presentations**

Articles and presentations designed for public discourse and academic gatherings, emphasizing the urgency of the research findings.



## **Submission to journals on cybersecurity, human rights, and peace studies**

Targeted submissions to academic journals that focus on the intersection of internet governance, human rights, and peace initiatives.

# Challenges and Mitigation

Challenge	Mitigation Strategy
Access to conflict zones	Partner with local CSOs & community leaders
Respondent safety	Anonymous interviews and encrypted data collection
Governmental pushback	Ensure neutrality and academic independence
Language barriers	Use interpreters and culturally relevant translators

# Thank You!

Aaron Promise Mbah

NextGen@ICANN83

Institute of Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge

HSE University, Moscow

+7996647-16-31, [ambah@hse.ru](mailto:ambah@hse.ru), [theaaronpromise@gmail.com](mailto:theaaronpromise@gmail.com)