HER INTERNET

BIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Happy new year from HER Internet!

We jumpstart this new year with exciting updates in this eighth edition of our biannual newsletter. From the operationalization of our resource center, advancement in digital safety and security trainings to commemoration of our 6 years' anniversary through supporting 10 organizations in software updates and installation, the second half of 2024 was nothing short of transformative—a testament to our commitment to restoring agency and empowering womxn as agents of social change as showcased in this newsletter.

During this period, we witnessed more stakeholders from across the board, both in governments and private sectors highlight the growing concerns around cybercrime, online and Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV) due to limited or lack of digital illiteracy, safety and security following the fast integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, low internet penetration in rural areas and high costs on data and internet enabled devices which have escalated the widening gender digital divide that has affected and alienated more structurally silenced womxn and communities as Uganda, Africa and the world rapidly evolves and increasingly becomes dependent on digitalization, hence, leaving many underrepresented and behind.

Through impactful collaborations, support from communities, continuous awareness and advocacy initiatives, we have remained solid and persistent on empowering digital voices that are constantly censored, silenced or overlooked. As we reflect on these milestones, we look forward to deepening our work towards a just and equitable digital world—one that leaves no one behind.

We extend our unreserved gratitude to allies, partners, friends and community members for relentlessly supporting our work, and, happy reading!

Newsletter Highlights

STRENGTHENING DIGITAL SAFETY: FOLLOW-UP TRAINING FOR COHORT 3.

#HERInternetAt6: ILGA SOFTWARE UPDATE PROJECT IN COMEMORATION OF CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH.

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS TRAININGS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FEMPEACEEA PROJECT.

STRENGTHENING DIGITAL SAFETY: FOLLOW-UP TRAINING FOR COHORT 3.

On Tuesday 25 June 2024, HER Internet conducted a virtual follow-up session for participants of the Digital Safety and Security Training held earlier in April with support from the Tor Project with an aim to equip activists, advocates, and organizations with the tools necessary to navigate an increasingly complex digital landscape. This half-day event revisited critical concepts which included; safeguarding against cyber-attacks like phishing and social engineering while reinforcing strategies for privacy and anonymity online.

#HERINTERNETAT6: ILGA SOFTWARE UPDATE PROJECT IN COMEMORATION OF CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH.
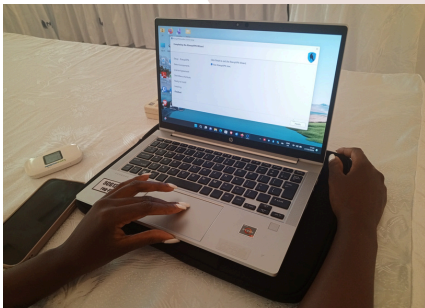
As HER Internet marked her 6th anniversary #HERInternetAt6 in October which coincided with Cybersecurity Awareness Month 2024, we extended support to 10 queer-led organizations by providing authentic and up-to-date software solutions with support from ILGA world. These included Windows operating systems, antivirus programs, and Microsoft Office packages to bolster digital safety and security at individual staff and organizational levels. This initiative reflects our commitment to empowering advocacy groups with the resources needed to achieve their goals while ensuring their resilience and efficiency as they advance their respective advocacy goals following the constantly shrinking civic space amidst the extreme levels of surveillance and censorship given the present restrictive context.

As technology evolves, so do the challenges, and we must continue adapting. We remain committed to expanding our reach, building stronger networks, and advocating for policies that center womxn's voices in digital rights conversations.

Sandra Kwikiriza,
Executive Director, HER Internet

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS TRAININGS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FEMPEACEEA PROJECT.

HER Internet in partnership with FemPeaceEA project conducted Media and Information Literacy and Digital Skills trainings themed **"Access to the internet and being online is a fundamental human right"**. The purpose for these trainings was to impart and strengthen the capacity and skills of 20 representatives from womxn led organizations operating in Uganda and Ethiopia when it comes to both basic and advanced levels in digital literacy, safety and security in relation to devices, internet usage and social media advocacy that will contribute to championing the project objectives of the FemPeaceEA project following needs and pre-assessments that were conducted in preparation and during of the first cohort which took place in October 2024.

PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE ON ICTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

Sandra Kwikiriza, the Executive Director at HER Internet participated in a Parliamentary Dialogue organized by Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) on 14th August 2024 in Kampala, Uganda. The high-level meeting brought together Members of Parliament, civil society, and private sector representatives to discuss the transformative potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in advancing livelihoods and human rights. The dialogue also tackled challenges such as cyber-attacks, hate speech, misinformation, and repressive policies, therefore, resulting to actionable insights on legislative reform to foster an open, inclusive and safe digital environment in Uganda.

SAFETY FOR VOICES REGIONAL CONVENING.

We participated in the regional gathering for the Safety for Voices in the Age of Digital Activism Convening in Kenya which was hosted by Association for Progressive Communications (APC) under the Safety for Voices Consortium from 5th to 7th September 2024 which centered on addressing the challenges faced by feminists and Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in the digital age, and, initiate the process of co-creating a policy agenda that responds to the lived experiences of WHRDs in relation to technology and feminist holistic protection. Key outcomes included drafting policy recommendations and fostering collective advocacy for WHRDs' safety and data sovereignty especially at local level in relation to different contexts especially using the feminist holistic protection.

EAST AFRICAN INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (EAIGF) 2024.

HER Internet participated in the 12th East African Internet Governance Forum (EAIGF) held on 11th to 12th September 2024 under the theme **"Building Our Multi-Stakeholder Digital Future for East Africa."** This forum convened policymakers, civil society, and industry leaders to discuss governance, access and innovation. Read more about this event via: _https://www.herinternet.org/?p=3124_

FORUM ON INTERNET FREEDOM IN AFRICA #FIFAFRICA2024.

From 25th to 27th September 2024, HER Internet attended the 11th Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa #FIFAfrica event co-hosted by Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) and AfricTivistes in Dakar, Senegal. This groundbreaking event marked the forum's first edition in Francophone Africa with key discussions that explored themes such as; democratic governance and digital rights in Africa. Read more about the event via: _https://shorturl.at/aE02O_

#CIVICSPACETV: THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMXN.

In an episode of #WomenSpeaking which aired on Civic Space TV on 15th October 2024, Sandra Kwikiriza, Executive Director of HER Internet joined a conversation with Beatrice Kayaga (Internet Society), Yasimn Ahmed (FemTech Law Initiative) and host, Turiho Danita to discuss **The Digital Gender Divide and Its Impact On Womxn In Uganda** as they addressed the structural barriers hindering womxn's access to digital opportunities such as; high internet costs, cultural norms, and economic inequalities as they also emphasized inclusive policies, urgent need for collaborations and digital education as actionable solutions to bridge the gender digital divide.

The program was supported by #ReCIPEProject on #DigitalRightsUG which is being implemented by Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG), Oxfam In Uganda, Oxfam In Ireland and European Union (EU) in Uganda. Catch their insights on this key issue via: _https://youtu.be/F1Ydekcz2bQ?si=hc1A29U3ugJrQp0M_

"KWA UMOJA WE RISE": 31ST ILGA WORLD CONFERENCE 2024

HER Internet was present at the historic 31st edition of ILGA World Conference which took place in Cape Town, South Africa from 11th to 15th November 2024 under the theme **"Kwa Umoja We Rise"** referencing a phrase in Swahili that celebrates unity and collective progress. The conference which was hosted by Iranti and Gender DynamiX marked the first time in 25 years that the event returned to African soil which symbolized a renewed commitment to alliances inclusion, alliances across movements, and solidarity across the continent and the globe with over 1,450 delegates from over 100 countries in attendance. For five days, the event brought together hundreds of LGBTI human rights defenders and development experts, policy makers, international human rights mechanisms experts, government representatives, researchers, journalists, funders, and allies to respond in global solidarity to the ongoing anti-rights pushback.

IDENTITY-BASED DISINFORMATION IN FOREIGN INFORMATION MANIPULATION AND INTERFERENCE (FIMI): COUNTERING THE WEAPONIZATION OF WHO WE ARE.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) StratCom Team at the European Union and Government of Canada organized **"Identity-Based Disinformation in FIMI: Countering the weaponization of who we are"** on 14th November 2024 at La Tricoterie, Brussels, Belgium. The full-day event which brought together civil society organizations, academia, governments, and the private sector to strengthen the global counter-disinformation community as they explored the various aspects of Identity-Based FIMI/ Disinformation and the intersections of gendered, sexualized/LGBTQ+, and race/ethnic disinformation.

In an interactive speed dating session, Diana Karungi, the Programs Director at HER Internet gave a presentation; How social media algorithms influence the spread of disinformation: Is there an equitable digital future for structurally silenced communities? which was inspired by our 2024 research report "Navigating Algorithms: The Case of Structurally Silenced Communities in Uganda" that highlighted how the internet through the workings of algorithms has been used to spread misinformation and disinformation targeting Uganda's queer movement. Catch a glimpse of the event here; _https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/safeguarding-democracy-building-resilience-against-identity-based-disinformation_en_

AFRICAN SCHOOL ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE #AFRISIG 2024).

From 14th to 19th November 2024, HER Internet's Communications and Advocacy Lead, Mulungi Sanyu attended African School on Internet Governance #AfriSIG2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia pertaining to the subject **"Building Internet Governance Leadership in Africa"** with discussions focused on aligning the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with the African Union (AU) Data Policy Framework, proposing strategies for harmonization. This transformative experience emphasized collaboration across sectors for internet governance in Africa. Read more about the event via: _https://shorturl.at/x32AI_
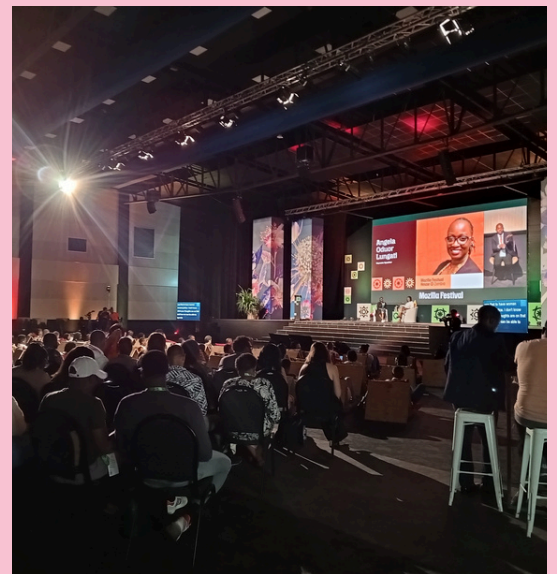
MOZILLA FESTIVAL #MOZFEST 2024 EVENT: SOLIDARITY AND TOGETHERNESS.

Mozilla Festival #MozFest House 2024, a gathering for collective action in pursuit towards achieving trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems and technology in Africa took place from 19th to 21st November 2024 at the Lusaka International Conference Center (LICC) in Lusaka, Zambia. Under the theme **"Solidarity and togetherness"**, this 3 days' event brought together activists, policymakers, technologists, artists, and civil society actors as a collective to collaborate and create a new normal for a future that listens and adapts, ensuring technology serves us all.

Diana Karungi, the Programs Director at HER Internet engaged in a panel discussion **"Africa's Elections vs Gendered Disinformation: What is it for Women in Politics?"** with Cherie Abhiambo Oyier (Advocate of the High Court of Kenya and Programs Officer of Women's Digital Rights at KICTANet), Angela Minayo (Advocate of the High Court of Kenya and Digital Rights and Policy Programs Officer at Article19 Eastern Africa) and moderated by Iribagiza David (Programme Manager, Information Sharing & Networking at Women Of Uganda- WOUGNET). Together, they delved into issues concerning the alarming rise of gendered disinformation across Africa with a focus on Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda, where female politicians face disproportionate online abuse, assessed the role of AI in spreading disinformation, examined national and international legal frameworks that can be utilized to address gendered disinformation and how civil society efforts can counter these harmful tactics.

FEMINIST MOVEMENT BUILDING WITH JASS.

The Deputy Executive Director at HER Internet, Kettie Kahume attended the JASS (Just Associates) Feminist Building School in South Africa from 24th to 28th November 2024. The gathering equipped womxn's rights activists with strategies and tools to strengthen feminist movements and address systemic challenges.

6TH HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTION #HRCUg2024.

The Communications and Advocacy Lead at HER Internet, Sanyu Mulungi attended the 6th Human Rights Convention #HRCUg2024 which was organized by Chapter Four Uganda themed **"Rejuvenating Human Rights Promotion in Uganda"** which took place on 27th November in Kampala. The event convened representatives from diverse sectors, including civil society, academia, government, media, and development partners who dived into key discussions that centered on critical topics such as shaping Uganda's new constitutional framework, peaceful protest rights in a democracy (drawing insights from Kenya), promoting equality and inclusion through legislation, leveraging media and digital tools for human rights advocacy, and the impact of artificial intelligence on freedoms of expression and speech. The forum also addressed the constantly repressive regulatory environment for civil society while envisioning a more enabling space for activism.

15th AWID INTERNATIONAL FORUM: RISING TOGETHER.

From 2nd to 5th December 2024, we attended the 15th Association for Women's Rights in Development- AWID International Forum in Bangkok, Thailand under the theme #RisingTogether which convened feminists, womxn's rights, gender justice and allied global movements in all our diversity and humanity from across the world with the sole purpose to connect, heal, rise and thrive together to meet the challenges of the present and the future times collectively.

" You are not digitally secure however much you have the knowledge, it's about our behaviors and attitudes in enhancing our digital security, not only online, but also through our physical behavior. Sandra Kwikiriza ~ Executive Director ~ HER Internet

On 10th December 2024, Sandra Kwikiriza, the Executive Director at HER Internet took part in an impactful X Space conversation titled **From Policy To Practice: A Closer Look At Uganda's Legal Response To Online Gender Based Violence** along with David Iribagiza (Programme Manager, Information Sharing & Networking at Women Of Uganda- WOUGNET), Haguma Jimmy (Senior Superintendent of Police Law Enforcement- Head Electronic Counter Measures Department under the Directorate of ICT and hosted by Yasmin Ahmed (Director Programs at FemTech Law Initiative) as they unpacked Uganda's legal approaches to tackling Online Gender-Based Violence in commemoration of #16DaysofActivism 2024. Follow link to listen in; *https://x.com/ femtechXlaw/status/1866475643912737044? t=uT02ZQT6Zm4_J947JechuQ&s=19*

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: A CLOSER LOOK AT UGANDA'S LEGAL RESPONSE TO ONLINE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE.

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