Senegal Shutdown After Action Report

By: Laura Schwartz-Henderson, Ababacar Diop, & Daouda Diagne

About this Report, Methods & Demographics

On June 1, 2023, protests erupted in Senegal over the sentencing of opposition leader, Ousmane Sonko. As the protests turned violent, ISPs in Senegal began to block social media platforms and disrupted network traffic to major mobile providers. During the time, most social media platforms were blocked for one week (with the exception of the encrypted communication application Telegram, which was continuously blocked until at least August 1st). In addition, there were several network disruptions between June 3rd and June 6th of 2023, and then again on July 31st, 2023.

This survey was sent to the Senegalese Prepare & Prevent Network, coordinated by Jonction, Computech Institute, and the OPTIMA project. This network was initially convened in May of 2022 to discuss the challenges facing Senegal’s democracy and the threat of future internet shutdowns in the lead up to elections in 2024. As an output from this initial strategic workshop and additional research, we published an Internet Shutdown Advocacy Needs Assessment in November of 2022 outlining the threats civil society faces as well as civil society needs to better prepare for and prevent internet shutdowns.

This needs assessment research in Senegal cautioned against ignoring the risk of an internet shutdown in the lead up to the 2024 election and concluded that civil society was not prepared to respond to a shutdown. Following from this assessment, the OPTIMA project funded several activities to respond to the needs of Senegalese civil society and to equip the network with the skills to better respond to future shutdowns. These activities included the development of a network measurement training program to teach how to collect and analyze network measurements to document shutdowns and how to coordinate with international actors. Funding also supported awareness-raising activities, resource development on circumvention strategies and tools, as well as research into the legal underpinnings of a potential shutdown.

---

1 For a full report published by the Open Observatory Network Initiative (OONI) documenting the network disruptions and application blocks in Senegal, please read https://ooni.org/post/2023-senegal-social-media-blocks/#network-outages
The report draws on an after-action survey sent to P&P network members and circulated to other civil society actors in Senegal. The purpose of this survey was twofold:

- To capture the impact of the internet shutdown(s) in Senegal as well as respondents’ assessments of capacity, preparedness and risk in the country, with an aim to identify areas of need in order to support to civil society in continuing to advocate against internet shutdowns.
- To determine the impact of participation in the OPTIMA Prepare & Prevent network such as respondents’ levels of preparedness, knowledge and confidence around key internet shutdown advocacy skills.

This after-action report was designed to be deployed quickly to understand qualitatively the experience of those on the ground during the June 2023 shutdown, to assess the responsiveness of the P&P network, and to gather actionable information about existing needs and the threat of future shutdowns in the country. Considering the small distribution of the survey to select actors, the survey should not be considered representative and rather treated as a measure of the qualitative experiences of a small community of civil society actors within the country. It is also important to note that this survey was sent in June before the second period of internet shutdowns that began in late July.

The survey was sent July 7 and respondents had 9 days to respond and circulate. The survey had 30 total responses, of which 47% (n=14) reported that they were a part of OPTIMA’s Prepare & Prevent Network, and 15 others (50%) reported that they were not a part of the P&P network. One respondent reported that they were not sure if they participated in the P&P network. The respondents represent a number of professions, with 23% describing their primary profession as lawyers, 17% as journalists, 13% as activists, 7% as professionals working in information technologies, 7% as researchers, 7% as students, 7% as private sector, and 19% as ‘other’. The majority of the respondents (63%) reported that they live in Dakar.

The Shutdown: Verifying what occurred

Respondents were first asked about their experiences during the shutdown and to verify the dates and times the shutdown occurred. The responses were in fact divided, with a few respondents noting that the shutdowns were sudden or that they don’t remember the exact date and time. These respondents said it happened suddenly or during stressful events. Other respondents remembered
that the shutdowns took place during the demonstrations but could not place an exact date or time. A majority (63%) noted a date in June, and 50% gave an exact date. However, there was some disagreement amongst those respondents, with some noting that the response began on June 1 (23%) and others (10%) saying it began on June 2. Other dates provided for the start were June 3, June 4, and June 5. Only a few respondents gave a range, with one respondent saying it lasted “several days,” and others providing specific ranges, including “from 01 to 03 June 2023, between 08H to 23H,” “between June 2 and June 4,” “on the night of June 6 to 7 (internet) and June 4 for social networks,” “Friday, June 2 at 6:30 AM,” “June 1 to 7 almost all day,” and “June 2... lasted almost 4 days.”

When asked what social media services, apps, or platforms were blocked, 93% (n=28) reported WhatsApp as blocked, 83% (n=25) reported Facebook as blocked, 77% (n=23) reported YouTube as blocked, 50% (n=15) reported both Twitter and Instagram as blocked, and 47% (n=14) reported Telegram as blocked.

Respondents were also asked to describe their reaction when the shutdown happened. Many respondents described being very surprised the shutdown had occurred, and many wrote that they had tested multiple services before verifying with others that it was a shutdown. For most respondents, verifying the shutdown was a social experience. As one respondent wrote, “My mobile data connection was not working and I was unable to access the services and platform. I restarted my phone thinking it was just me, but finally got the echo that it was global.” One respondent said a friend called “to ask if I could log in. When I checked I saw that it didn’t work.” While another respondent “knew there was a cut when I called a friend after trying to connect all the time. I immediately informed my workplace and waited for it to come back to download a VPN.” Another respondent “got worried and asked my sisters who informed me of the situation,” and another said they “called some friends.” A few respondents described how they spent time thinking the issues were everyday failures to connect. One respondent said, “I was thinking more that it was exhausted credit,” and another described how “in the first moments of the cut, I thought it was a network problem so I waited.” Another wrote, “First I thought my wifi had a problem. I unplugged the box then, not seeing that it was not working, I restarted my phone. Then I realized there was a problem when I went to my computer and it didn’t work.”

A few respondents described using network measurement tools to verify that there was a shutdown. One respondent said, “At first it was my WhatsApp was not working after I found that none of my social networks were not working, so I did a network test with OONI probe, and the result was all
networks were blocked thereafter there had an internet outage.” Another respondent said, “After an observation that there is a slowdown in the Internet, we use the test tools to test to see if there is a cut.” Another respondent described their workflow to verify, saying, “I knew there was a cut because social networks and Twitter, in this case, no longer worked, I carried out tests, and I had confirmation. I tried VPN and it worked.”

Many others described how their initial reaction led to VPN use as well. Several respondents described their use of VPNs, with some saying they already had a VPN and many others saying they downloaded the VPN once they understood it was censorship. As one respondent reported, they were “surprised and resigned until having information about VPNs.” Another said, “I even waited more than 30 minutes hoping that the connection would be restored. That’s when I knew there was a problem. Then we were asked to install the VPN application.” Another respondent wrote, “On June 1, 2023, I logged into WhatsApp to listen to audio messages and read text messages. I realized that the network was inaccessible. I tried with other networks such as YouTube and Facebook... The result was the same – inaccessible. However I could send and receive messages by email. Then I got to know about VPNs and downloaded Psiphon, which gave me access to social media again.” One respondent reported that they heard about the shutdown through the media and then downloaded a VPN. One respondent said they learned of the shutdown “through the government communiqué.”

**Impact**

Respondents were asked a series of questions on the shutdown’s impact on their personal and professional lives, their friends and family, and the Senegalese economy and society.

By far, the most mentioned impact is related to disruptions to economic activity and professional endeavors. At a personal level, respondents noted that the shutdown led to “slowness and loss of efficiency,” “the cut slowed our work,” “slowed down my work.” One respondent described all work with business partners as effectively “blocked” for five days. Another said, “Since I work online, my professional activities were wiped out.” Several respondents described how the political situation, protests, and chaos in the streets led many people to decide to work from home, but that the shutdown made it impossible to work. As one respondent described, “Given the insecurity, it was decided to telework. This was not possible without the internet. We had two activities to carry out at this time which were canceled.”
Many respondents specifically pointed out the disruption to mobile money services as one of the major negative outcomes of the shutdown, impacting respondents’ personal lives as well as the wider economy. As one respondent wrote, “I could not make transactions via money transfer.”

Beyond the personal impact, many respondents described the impact of the loss of mobile money services on businesses and the wider economy. The disruption to online financial transactions was one of the most mentioned impacts of the shutdown, with 30% of all respondents explicitly noting this in their responses. As a few respondents described, “most companies that use the internet to work, especially money transfer services via mobile, have not worked” and that any e-commerce activities were disrupted, saying “there were some who did not sell their products, especially those who sell online.” A few respondents specifically described the impact of the shutdown on people with relatives abroad and the ability to send and receive money, as well as to communicate and share information about their safety and security.

Respondents described how the shutdown’s impact on Senegal’s digital systems upended what is “normal” in Senegal and threatened the stability of Senegal’s society and economy. As one respondent argued, “This is a big equation... the paralysis of the economy, decline of democracy... for citizens still reeling from an ever-growing crisis.” Another explained how “this slowed down the integral functioning of the socio-economic circuit. Work was on hold, and basic social services were all out. Banks, transport, and even access to information was a problem.” Another respondent described Senegalese society during the shutdown as “our social ties were at half-mast.” Respondents wrote that the shutdown indicates a change in Senegalese politics, and that this “violation” has led to “a loss of confidence.” One respondent described an overall societal feeling of “frustration” and a “desire to trash everything.”

Other respondents described how the shutdown impacted their social and psychological health and wellbeing, as the shutdown occurred during a national political crisis and a time of uncertainty, and they couldn’t share or receive information. “Just thinking about the cut, not being able to reach a friend or relative was stressful,” said one respondent. Many respondents also described feelings of “isolation,” “frustration,” and “anxiety,” explaining how “it was a time of stress and anxiety since I live alone,” and another saying that they “felt isolated from the rest of the world.” Other respondents talked about how they provided support to friends and family who didn’t know what was happening, writing, “The family panicked because they had no news, and beyond the family...
they get information from their networks.” A few respondents described how this anxiety and uncertainty continues, as they now know the internet could be shut down at any point.

Many respondents wrote about the shutdown’s implications on democracy and stability in the country. As one respondent described, the shutdown was “a threat to democracy, a break and a slowdown in the economy, a disastrous situation for Senegalese society.” One respondent said, “This cut, coupled with the other elements of chaos present in Senegal, have weakened Senegalese democracy. Many rights have been violated.” Another respondent noted that the more that other democracies around the world use shutdowns, the easier it is to justify a shutdown, saying “the large countries more developed than Senegal have done it... the governance of a country gives priority to the principle of maintaining order.”

Respondents who identified as journalists described how the shutdown particularly impacted their entire workflow in delivering the news, preventing them from sending “articles to the editorial staff” and posting “articles on our news website.” From the news consumer side, one respondent described how seeking and reading the news during the shutdown was not as easy and “cost more.”

Finally, respondents were asked specifically to describe any impacts of the shutdowns on vulnerable or marginalized groups. A few respondents described difficulties caring for or reaching the elderly, saying, “A friend told me that, with this cut, it is very difficult for me to meet the needs of my mother whom I have cared for since the death of our late father.” Another said, “Elderly people who only know WhatsApp to communicate were really stressed. Especially those who have family members abroad.” Others argued that economically disadvantaged people were thrown into chaos and that disruptions in money transfer services and social supports impacted these groups. One respondent noted that most disadvantaged and uneducated people have little knowledge about VPNs, and that this lack of awareness further “marginalizes them from society.”

**Preparations**

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about their preparations in advance of the shutdown and how equipped they felt to respond.

“"This cut, coupled with the other elements of chaos present in Senegal, have weakened Senegalese democracy."

---

"This cut, coupled with the other elements of chaos present in Senegal, have weakened Senegalese democracy."

---
In response to the question, “how aware were you of the threat of an internet shutdown before it happened?” nearly half (47%) reported that they were “very aware” (5/5) of the threat of an internet shutdown. Another 17% reported they were aware (4/5), 10% that they had a little awareness (2/5), and 27% that they had no awareness at all. Of those who indicated they were a part of the OPTIMA Prepare and Prevent network, the average rating of awareness was 4.18/5 as compared to those who indicated they were not a part of the network (2.69/5).

Respondents were then asked, “How prepared would you say you were for the internet shutdown when it happened?” In this case, nearly half of the respondents (47%) reported that they were not prepared (1/5), with 17% reporting they were a little prepared (2/5), 7% as somewhat prepared (3/5), 10% as prepared (4/5) and 20% as very prepared (4/5). Of those who indicated they were a part of the OPTIMA Prepare and Prevent Network, the average rating of preparedness was 3.21/5 as compared to those who indicated they were not a part of the network: 1.69/5.

When asked to elaborate on these ratings, those who rated preparedness as low explained that they were surprised about the shutdown and with multiple respondents saying it was “unexpected.” Respondents described this surprise due to Senegal’s “democratic tradition” and that they have never before experienced this kind of censorship. As several respondents wrote, “Because Senegal is the showcase of democracy in West Africa, this was surprising,” “I never imagined that we would come to such a situation,” “I have never been the victim of such a situation,” and “Senegal is often quoted as an exception on a democratic level. One can’t expect to live such moments.” Others described how the shutdown “happened suddenly” and “was really a surprise.” Several of these respondents expressed regret that they were not already prepared to use VPNs or to have plans to carry out communications should a shutdown occur, with respondents noting, “I had not downloaded a VPN,” “I did not have an active VPN,” “I did not master the VPN system.” Another described, “If I was prepared, we could have taken our measures within the framework of the digital activities planned for the said period.”

Those who indicated a higher level of preparedness (4 or 5) also provided comments about why they felt more confident responding to the situation. Many of these respondents described that, despite Senegal’s strong democratic reputation, they believed there have been warning signs indicating a shutdown could occur. As one respondent described, “The socio-political tension was palpable.”
Another said, “During the local and legislative elections I did tests to check the state of the internet, and in view of the news on the desire to regulate social networks, I followed the debate. Knowing that the best way for the authorities to go about it is to cut the networks if they are unable to regulate.” A few noted that while this shutdown was the most significant shutdown Senegal has experienced, it is not the first. As one respondent described, “Knowing the Senegalese context, in this pre-election period and of demonstrations, it was very likely that there would be internet cuts, and this is not the first time. In 2021, Senegal had cut social media platforms.” Several of these participants described their participation in Prepare & Prevent activities, saying, “I took part in the OPTIMA project, which trained us on circumvention methods and tools,” “I had training from the OPTIMA project on network measurements, and I developed a preventative awareness project on circumvention tools for Internet shutdowns,” “I attributed it thanks to workshops that I participated with Jonction,” and “Internews had prepared me for a possible Internet shutdown.”

Respondents were then asked what steps they took prior to the shutdown to prepare themselves or their organization for a possible disruption of internet access. A plurality (43%) of the respondents indicated that one of the ways they had prepared was to download a VPN or share information about circumvention tools. One respondent said, “I had made a video to explain to people how to use a VPN and its importance,” “I advocated for others to download VPNs,” and another said, “I installed a VPN in order to stay connected... I also downloaded APK Extractor to share VPN APK files to allow others to install it.” One respondent who said they had not prepared for the shutdown said that, while they hadn’t downloaded a VPN before the shutdown, they now have post-shutdown. Other preparative measures mentioned included writing “a press release about restricting social media” in advance and making personal preparations for how to communicate with friends and family should there be a shutdown. Others noted specifically the activities they engaged in with the OPTIMA Prepare & Prevent Network, including making “network measurements with OONI, IODA, and MLab that I listen on a file with the different graphs explained,” measuring “internet connectivity and make interpretations,” developing “a measurement plan” (see full quote in the text box), organizing “an information and training workshop on Internet shutdown bypass tools,” designing and distributing “a brochure on bypass methods and tools,” building “workshops, awareness campaigns, studies and publications on social media platforms to denounce the closure of the Internet.”
Technical Skills

Circumvention Tools

Respondents were also asked a few questions specifically about the circumvention tools they used during the shutdown.

Respondents were asked to rate from 1 to 5 their ability to use VPNs or other circumvention tools. Of the respondents, 40% reported that it was very easy to use a VPN or bypass tool to access blocked services and it worked fine, 23% reported that they used a VPN and it mostly worked, 30% reported that they used a VPN and it sometimes worked, and 7% reported that they were not able to use a VPN. This indicates that to a large extent, the majority of respondents were able to, at some point, download and use a VPN.

When asked to name the VPNs that were used respondents mentioned Psiphon, (mentioned seven times), Proton VPN (mentioned twice), planet VPN, Tor, VPN Master Pro, Orbot, VPN Proxy Master, and VPN4.

A few respondents gave comments about their issues with VPNs, with one respondent saying “the connection was not stable. You have to activate it constantly,” and “sometimes the VPN was useless because in reality it was the mobile data connection that was blocked by the operators.” Others noted that while they used VPNs, they believe that there is a “poor perception of Senegalese on the usefulness and use of VPNs,” with another respondent saying that in their network, “some found the VPN very useful, but others did not want to use them for fear that their personal data would be collected.”

Network Measurement

Respondents were asked whether they collected network measurements during the shutdown. If they answered yes, they were asked a series of additional follow-on sessions.

Out of the 30 respondents, 12 respondents (40%) reported that they did collect measurements. Ten of these respondents also reported that they were part of the P&P network, representing 71% of those who indicated they were in the P&P network.

Of those who indicated that they collected measurements, respondents were asked how confident they were using various measurement tools (out of a scale of 0 out of 5, with 5 indicating a high level of confidence and 0 indicating that they have never used the tool). The tool that respondents reported they are most confident using is OONI, with an average rating of 4.17. Respondents
reported their confidence with M-Lab as 3.75, and RIPE Atlas as 1.75. One respondent reported they also used Internet Society’s Pulse.

Respondents were then asked to rate their confidence accessing and examining network measurement data sources (out of a scale of 0 out of 5, with 5 indicating a high level of confidence and 0 indicating that they have never used the tool). Participants rated their confidence with OONI explorer on average as 4/5, IODA as 3.5/5, M-Lab at 3.3/5, Google traffic data as 2.9/5, Censored Planet as 2.5/5 and RIPE Atlas as 2.25/5.

Legal Strategy

Respondents were asked questions on the legality of the internet shutdown and the legal approach.

In response to the question “Do you know if shutting down the internet was legal under Senegalese law?” there is some disagreement and confusion. Nine (30%) respondents indicated that they believe that the shutdown was legal, and 13 (43%) respondents indicating it was illegal. The rest of the respondents were unsure and gave qualified answers, included in the chart below.

Respondents were then asked if they had discussed a legal strategy to fight the internet shutdown in court. Five respondents (17%) indicated that they have discussed a legal strategy and 21 (70%) wrote that they have not discussed a legal strategy. When asked about which organizations they worked with during the shutdown to fight back, respondents listed Junction (mentioned nine times), Internews (mentioned four times), Article 19 Senegal (two times), Computech, OONI, Access Now, Paradigm Initiative, and Internet Society (each once).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal</th>
<th>Not legal</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The state of emergency prevails over law and order</td>
<td>This cut was not legal in itself because the right to information is a constitutional right.</td>
<td>Apart from the provisions of article 26 and following of the electronic communications code of 2018-28, which speaks about traffic measurements, no other provision, to my knowledge, authorizes internet shutdowns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right to information is enshrined in Senegalese law but must be regulated</td>
<td>No, the cut is not legal under Senegalese law, which guarantees access to information and freedom of expression.</td>
<td>Even if it is legal, internet shutdowns constitute a restriction of the freedoms of Internet users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was legal, yes, since there is no law that talks about the internet being a human right. However, it</td>
<td>Not legal, however, the government tried to explain itself by retaining that it was to fight against false information</td>
<td>From a legal point of view, the authority has this prerogative when the security and stability of the country are at stake; the fundamental issue resides in the proportionality of the measure in relation to the situation at the time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
has affected freedom of expression which is therefore illegal.

This measure was based on a legal text, but it had no legal basis which was justified

Access to information is a fundamental rule any cuts going in the direction of achieving this right is a violation of the law. Internet shutdown is not legal in Senegal

What has been put forward is the fight against fake news and hate messages to justify the cut when there were other legal possibilities. For example, the suspension or blocking of the account concerned, the withdrawal of the content concerned. On the other hand, the possibility of cutting is well in the code of electronic communications.

Assessing & Mitigating Future Shutdown Risk

Respondents were asked to rate the likelihood of a future internet shutdown in Senegal in the next three months, in the next six months, and in the next year. Respondents rated, on average the threat within three months to be 3.1/5, in six months to be 3.4/5 and in the next year as 3.5/5.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide explanations for these risk ratings. Of those who rated the risk as below 3/5, respondents wrote that “tensions have begun to ease,” that President Sall has announced that he will not run for the presidency, and that the shutdown proved to be negatively impactful with “economic losses and inefficiency.” Of those who rated the shutdown as likely or very likely to happen (4 or 5), respondents commented that the upcoming elections are still very tense, that “authorities in their speeches think that the shutdown allowed the return of calm,” and that the statements made by Ousmane Sonko are indications that there will be more demonstrations and arrests. As one respondent described, “Presidential elections in Senegal are scheduled for February 2024, and the whole political class is not in agreement on how to go to the elections, which is why there is likely to be political tensions and internet cuts.”

Finally, respondents were asked what, in their opinion, needs to be done to ensure that civil society is better prepared should another internet shutdown occur in the next year. Many respondents wrote that more training for technical skills (network measurement and circumvention) is needed and that there is a need to accelerate advocacy and awareness campaigns to argue against shutdowns and draw on the experience of the June shutdown. As one respondent wrote, there is a need to “conduct advocacy activities with stakeholders and raise awareness on network outage issues and training on measurement tools in order to build a stronger community of testers.”

Another respondent wrote “Civil society must be better equipped to educate more communities about circumvention tools.” Other advocacy activities mentioned include direct lobbying with the
Senegalese state, conducting research to demonstrate the negative impact of this shutdown, and building campaigns using this information, “sharing alternatives to shutdowns,” bringing in new allies and civil society actors into a larger coalition, building a legal strategy and pushing for a protective law to be passed, building an “internet monitoring council” or “task force,” “holding press briefings,” and “strengthening the digital security or organizations.”

Respondents were also given the opportunity to describe any activities they want to personally plan to prevent and fight back against shutdowns. Respondents suggested extending existing network measurement trainings across the 14 regions in the country, making videos in local languages about the dangers of shutdowns, training youth about shutdowns and circumvention methods, creating an easy-to-understand brochure on how to engage in anti-internet shutdown advocacy, and conducting research to document the economic, political, and legal impact of the June shutdown.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The future of Senegal's democracy is uncertain amid the looming risk of more internet shutdowns as the February 2024 elections draw near. To safeguard against this, it is vital that our community works to strengthen existing networks and empower civil society to engage in proactive advocacy. This demands a concerted and strategic effort, involving additional resources and targeted support. Based on the data gathered from this survey, we propose the following key areas that require funding and attention.

1) Strengthen existing networks and network measurement training programs: Members of the Prepare & Prevent Network rated their preparedness for the shutdown as double those who were not a part of this network. The efforts to prepare this group led to a coordinated collection of measurements and increased awareness. There remains an urgent need to further expand and reinforce this network, with particular emphasis on bolstering the ability of civil society to technically document shutdowns through advanced network measurement capabilities. By equipping this network with the necessary resources and support, it can effectively respond to future challenges and serve as a robust line of defense against potential shutdowns.

2) Build campaigns and resources to increase awareness and literacy around circumvention tools and VPNs: One significant aspect of these efforts involves localizing and translating resources about VPNs to ensure accessibility to all segments of the Senegalese population.
Moreover, direct outreach and targeted training programs should be implemented to clearly outline the various tool options available, alongside their respective trade-offs, thereby dispelling myths and demystifying VPNs for the public. These initiatives are key to fostering informed decision-making and empowering individuals to circumvent any potential future internet shutdowns.

3) Engage in follow up research to better understand how the shutdown impacted the economy, society, and Senegalese governance and democracy: By conducting impact research, we can gain valuable insights into the ramifications of the shutdown, allowing for advocates to craft impactful campaigns to bring in new stakeholders to advocacy coalitions and convince policymakers to make well-informed decisions.

4) Develop strategies and narratives to directly communicate with and lobby government: To effectively engage with the government and advocate against internet shutdowns, it is essential to develop robust strategies and compelling narratives backed by tangible evidence of the shutdown’s detrimental impact. Armed with concrete data, stakeholders can directly communicate with policymakers and government officials, urging them to consider the necessity and proportionality of future shutdowns. There is a need to collectively determine a strategy toward productive dialogue that could potentially lead to more balanced decisions in confronting future protests and demonstrations around the elections without resorting to blocking internet services.

5) Organize a multistakeholder dialogue to advance the above objective to engage government, while also including the private sector. This dialogue would aim to explore alternatives to internet shutdowns during moments of political crisis and uncertainty.

6) Engage the media: There is a need for more media reporting on the negative impacts of internet shutdowns in order to inform the public and pressure policymakers.

7) Focus on mobile money: As part of this research, many respondents noted the impact that the shutdown had on mobile money companies and financial transactions. This presents an opportunity to engage these companies and gain a deeper understanding of the extent of the impact. Building relationships with such companies can potentially lay the groundwork for impactful advocacy campaigns centered around safeguarding financial accessibility and inclusivity during times of crisis. Such campaigns can advocate for measures to prevent disproportionate harm to vulnerable segments of the population who rely heavily on mobile money services.
8) Engage in Strategic Planning around Legal Strategy: Respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the legal basis of the shutdown and the potential legal strategies that can be employed to challenge future shutdowns. It is crucial to provide support for comprehensive analysis of existing laws and regulations pertaining to internet shutdowns in Senegal. This analysis will offer clarity on the legal frameworks currently in place and identify potential gaps that could be addressed to prevent and challenge future shutdowns effectively. Developing a long-term legal strategy will provide civil society and advocates with a firm foundation to protect digital rights and prevent undue disruptions to online access and communication channels.