report

DATAFEST
AFRICA 23
Kampala | Nairobi

turning the
data tables

No gender equality without data equality

POLLICY

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Contents

Background

DataFest Africa is an annual event hosted by Pollicy that ultimately celebrates data science and its ever-evolving impact on the African continent. With a pre-event in Kampala, Uganda, this year's main event in Nairobi, Kenya, brought together data enthusiasts, researchers, academia, feminists, and governments in Africa to address gender data and artificial intelligence (AI) bias and promote gender equality in data. The conference was hosted in a hybrid format and centered around understanding gender data as well as the need to promote the intersectionality of gender and data. It provided a platform for in-depth conversation on how data affects women and girls from data scientists to women who consume and use data in their work

Objectives of Datafest Africa 2023

- To identify and propose practical solutions for addressing gender data and artificial intelligence (AI) bias in Africa.

- To facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among data enthusiasts, researchers, academia, feminists, and governments in Africa, regarding AI and open data, with a view to promoting gender equality in data.

Key Partners

The fourth edition of the DataFest Africa was an outstanding success owing to the immense support of key civic technology stakeholders, donors, and activists at large. Pollicy received support from Sunbird AI, Aga-Khan University, Open Cities Lab, Hewlett Foundation, Ford Foundation, Mozilla, GIZ, Africa Data Hub, Open Institute, National ICT Innovation Hub, Rwazi, Development Initiatives, Evidence and Methods Lab, CIPESA and AirQo.

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MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

EVIDENCE AND METHODS LAB
simplify visualise share measure

Sunbird AI

rwazi
decide with data

Pre-Event Kampala, Uganda

The DataFest Africa 2023 Pre-event was held on 29th June 2023 at the National ICT Innovation Hub in Kampala Uganda. It served as a platform for diverse stakeholders to discuss the intersection of data and gender equality in the context of artificial intelligence (AI). The pre-event brought together 69 participants from various backgrounds, including data enthusiasts, researchers, academics, government representatives, and industry experts.

Key Highlights

VizQuest Competition

The VizQuest competition focused on data visualization for social impact. Participants utilized creative visualization techniques and tools such as dynamic charts, word clouds, interactive dashboards, Infographics and geographic mapping to address topics such as gender-based violence, education, and air quality. The competition was supported by mentors from organizations like Africa Data Hub, National ICT Innovation Hub, Evidence and Methods Lab, and AirQo who gave crucial advice and feedback to the competing teams.

Eight competing teams and one individual pitched their data visualization projects in front of a panel of judges, composed of experts in data visualization, data analysis, and communication. Participants were judged based on criteria such as creativity, feasibility, impact, technical proficiency, and presentation skills. Among the teams that presented their visualization projects, team SafeBangle emerged as the overall winner, addressing intimate partner violence in Uganda.Their remarkable work has earned them the grand prize of $1000. The Tech Innovators Students Association (TISA) secured second place for empowering survivors of violence against women and earned a well-deserved prize of $500. The Equity Visualisers earned third place for addressing the gender pay gap and won a prize of $300.

Lightning Talks

Lightning talks provided insights into practical data visualization, the role of data visualization in data analytics, the importance of data visualization in understanding air quality, and the significance of open data. Experts shared their knowledge on leveraging data for advocacy, insights, and collaboration, highlighting its potential to bridge information gaps and catalyse positive change.

Keynote Remarks

The keynote speaker, Bonnita Nyamwire, emphasized the need for data equality to achieve gender equality. She compared data to the new oil for addressing gender disparities and called for actionable change through accessible and updated data. Bonnita voiced the principle that no girl or woman should remain invisible in the realm of data. She asserted that inclusivity should be the cornerstone of our endeavors, stressing that no one should be left behind.

Main Event - Nairobi, Kenya

Day 1

Main Session

Opening Remarks
The opening remarks were given by the then Director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, Irene Mwendwa. Her remarks highlighted how online violence is now inward facing and there is a huge opportunity for capacity building to curb this violence. She expressed how Pollicy was excited to host Datafest Africa as it is a gateway to disseminating Pollicy's work as well as gather support from stakeholders to address gender data gaps and to build more resilient communities.

Pollicy's partner and co-host representative from Aga Khan University (AKU), Gitonga M'Mbijjewe shared his remarks on behalf of AKU. He reiterated how data is important for educators to gain more knowledge as well as develop strategies accordingly.   He shared how AKU has made it a central point to assess where the resources are focused using data. In his remarks he expressed how hosting Datafest2023 at AKU presented an opportunity to interrogate what other inequalities in data exist in the African continent because data is currency.

Lightning Talks

The Future is Now: What's Gender Got To Do With It

This lightning talk was given by the Founder and outgoing Executive Director of Pollicy Neema Iyer. Neema began her talk by pointing out the key gender data gaps in Africa notably those in data collection especially data collected at household level as various tools heavily rely on artificial intelligence that presents extended biases in the data collected. that presents extended biases in the data collected. The talk honed in on how important it is to focus on the type of biases that exist in data. A key example that was given was on health data and the biases that women have high pain tolerance in comparison to men. This was given as a classic case of what happens when there is insufficient gender data in health, particularly how it will lead to incorrect treatment prescriptions based on inaccurate data. Neema further shed light on the work Pollicy is doing to to integrated gender equity in their work including engagement with social media and other tech companies across africa on issues of gender and digital rights. She mentioned that Pollicy conducts research on tech and digital rights for women and girls but also through conevening partners and the general public through convenings like DataFest to discuss these issues. It was further highlighted that without input from policymakers in gender data matters, it may be futile as their input is necessary to make the work effective. Regarding navigating emerging technologies such as AI, Neema shared that cutting through the noise of AI hype is very difficult which is why Pollicy hosts events such as Datafest to start dialogue and bring these issues to the table. In closing, Neema encouraged active citizenry, emphasizing that if as feminist technology activists, we do not speak up for ourselves then no one else will.

Unmasking Data: Revealing The Hidden Bias Within

This lightning talk was given by the Aga Khan University Chief Data Innovation Officer, Farhana Alarakhiya. The presentation was kicked off with visual examples whose aim was to show the challenges algorithms introduce in data as they continue to make the bias ubiquitous. She mentioned that as the world gets more digital the impact of these small biases will continue to grow exponentially. A Key challenge she noted was that some of the popular AI is trained using language dictionaries that have gender stereotypes that thus introduce gender bias in the technology.

Three steps were suggested to counter the gender biases in the technology.

The first step is to acknowledge and address the bias thus the importance of having a bias detection mechanism and a mitigation framework in place for data collection. The second step is to eliminate the black box and have explainable Artificial Intelligence. It was highlighted that what algorithms need is diverse representative data and AI should be representative of the areas it is going to be. The third step is to have programs and policies to address the bias. This means lobbying the government and policymakers to prioritize this.

In closing Farhana concluded by acknowledging that an ideal world where gender bias is countered and detected contextually is possible, however some countries in Africa are at crossroads while others are moving backward in achieving unbiased gender data.
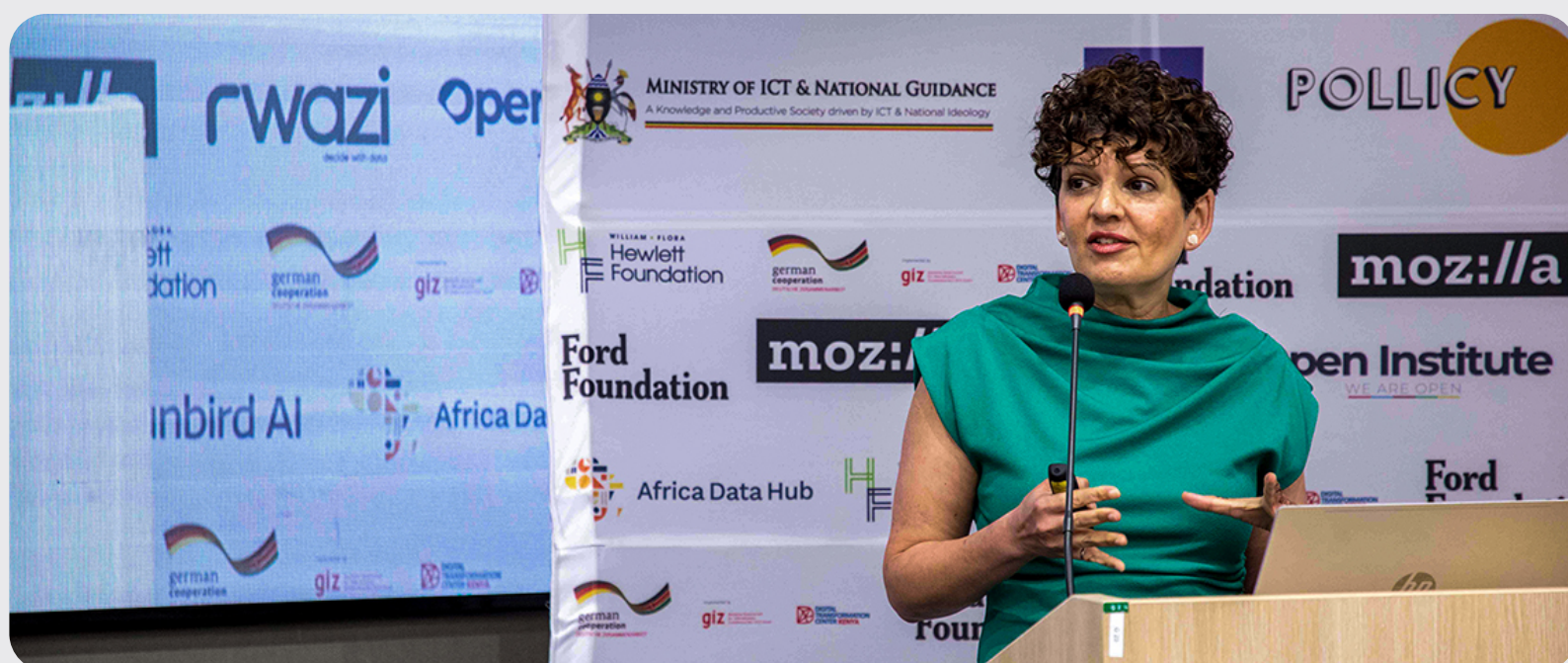
Ficha Uchi: Bringing Data Governance Closer To the People

This lighting talk was given by the Executive Director of Open Institute Al Kags and it took a storytelling approach with the speaker narrating an event of how possible and easy it was to collect people's information on social media platforms. The speaker explained that people are not aware how their data is collected and what happens to it after it has been collected and because of this the campaign "Ficha Uchi" (which translates to hide your nakedness) was launched by Open Institute to emphasize the importance of data and further how necessary it is to hide one's nakedness while navigating the internet and sharing data. Another example was given of how most internet users do not understand the meaning of "cookies"; small pieces of text sent to the users browser by a website you visit and they help that website remember information about your visit, which can both make it easier to visit the site again and make the site more useful to the user. For the most part, accepting cookies on a website will not result in any catastrophic event. However, something to take into consideration and be wary of is when a website asks the user if they want the user's device to remember what their login credentials are for that website. As a takeaway, it was highlighted how there is a need to make sure that data stops being so biased in favor of some social and economic statuses and the need for people to understand the concepts of data collection and how it impacts them.

Keynote Address

The keynote address was given by Prof. Monica Kerrets-Makau, the Academic Director at Thunderbird's Center for Excellence for Africa. In her address, she highlighted access to the right data as one of the biggest issues for gender data. She added that when access is mentioned it has to be specific to access for women on the African continent. Prof.Kerrets-Makau accentuated the benefits of gendered lens popularization as it translates to stopping the practice of gender being an add-on yet a gendered lens should be consistent and continuous since there are a lot of gender stereotypes in datasets in Africa. She mentioned the need to work together as data curators to bring out datasets that showcase the things that women are doing so that other women read about it. Another key insight was the need and the duty to empower women to speak as well as ensuring that resources we listen to and read have a gender-biased lens context and intersectionality and Feminist principles need to be applied in this gendered approach.

Prof. Monica Kerrets-Makau recommended the following:-

• Correction for Data Bias
• Increase collection and use of intersectional data
• Address issues of consent and confirmation of ethical use of data
• Data quality control and development of common frameworks

Panel Discussion Moderated by Neema Iyer
The discussion explored what gender data is and its role in shaping policy and practice for greater gender equality. Drawing on examples from a range of sectors and contexts, such as government, civil society, and private-sector, panelists discussed the opportunities and challenges of using data to drive change, as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of this approach. The aim of this panel was to inspire participants to think creatively about how they can leverage gender data to advance equality in their own fields and communities.

Carol Oyola, Regional Communications Manager, Aga Khan University addressed the question of how to navigate the resistance that stakeholders might have when communicating issues of

data. A challenge that was highlighted was the tendency to engage the community or the decision-makers at the very end, yet there is a need to engage the community and stakeholders at the onset for effective and inclusive data collection. The issue of sustainability of conversations beyond what is on paper so as to achieve more impact was emphasized in closing.

Blaise Aboh, Director, Data and Digital Products of Orodata Science addressed the question of some of the best practices for gender data collection. He highlighted that women and girls should be actively involved in data collection and have access to community data. An immediate action point that was said to be a way of figuring out a way to effectively disseminate the collected data. He encouraged participants to adopt creative approaches to ensure that data subjects gain value in contributing their data.

Amos Mpungu, Ministry of ICT Government Uganda Official addressed some innovative ways in which we can collect gender data more effectively and to get value out of it. Participants were encouraged to think about how they add value back to the subject that they are collecting data from. He emphasized the need to appreciate that data should be generated in everything we do. Emphasis was laid on the need to think about the automation of systems and how data collectors should not go out of their way to spend lots of money on gender data collection. In closing the speaker highlighted the need to build trust to motivate people to produce or give this data but realize value out of it which then will make them provide data freely.

Paul Mungai, UNDP National Project Manager – Data Governance, Kenya addressed the question of how we ensure gender data analysis is sustainable. He highlighted that there are a few dynamics to this and quality is one of them. He added that more often than not the quality of data that is collected is questionable and not easily accessible. The discussion further delved into how partners in the private sector can collaborate with national statistical offices because data collection is expensive and collaboration with the government is perceived as a key solution because it contributes to achieving other goals. In closing it was and highlighted that the use of indigenous knowledge through the incorporation of the community in the process is key.

Bonnita Nyamwire, Co-Director of Research, Pollicy addressed the issue of intersectionality in gender data collection. She mentioned that ensuring intersectionality should begin with designing the tools that one is going to use to collect or analyze the data and questions in these tools should capture intersectional identities. She also added that an analysis plan is important and it should speak to one's objective as it is important to prioritize the identities in the process as well. In closing, it was emphasized that power is a big issue in gender data and in feminism which calls for the need to understand who has power when analyzing data for women so as to ensure that women are involved in the process for data not to disappear in spreadsheets.

Some key action points from the discussion and the subsequent Q&A from participants were as follows:-

- The importance of centering the motive in storytelling when creating counter-narratives to highlight that there is more to the people than the challenges they are facing.
- Technology is a great enabler when used properly. Artificial Intelligence is a new area and it will take conversations like the ones that happen at Datafest to take it forward. It is important to consider whether or not our curriculums enable us to respond and start asking questions that challenge the applicability and workings of AI.
- Establish collaborative platforms to engage the community and stakeholders in gender data collection initiatives
- Women don't forget women: Development of inclusive strategies that involve women and girls in all stages of the data collection process, including design and processing.
- Implement mechanisms to ensure that data subjects receive tangible value from contributing their data, fostering trust and participation.

Closed Workshops

Afro Feminist Data Futures: Re-envisioning the Future of Data for Women in Africa

This transformative workshop brought together 25 participants cutting across feminist activists, legal scholars, academia and human rights defenders from different global contexts from across Africa to re-envision the future of data (including gender data, data governance, AI and other emerging technologies) on the African continent from an Afrofeminist perspective.

Building on the insights and recommendations presented in the "Afrofeminist Data Futures" study, participants explored the potential of data to advance gender equality in Africa, as well as the ethical and social implications of rapidly emerging technologies. The workshop provided a safe space for participants to share their experiences and perspectives on data and AI, and to collaborate on the development of concrete strategies and action plans for promoting progressive data collection, use, and management in Africa.

Day 1 was kicked off with opening remarks from Scheaffer Okore who highlighted how the internet has offered a valuable platform for women to showcase their work and create a community where they can represent themselves and discuss crucial topics related to gender equality, it has also become a breeding ground for violence against women, girls. She stated the objectives of the convening which included a discussion on speaking with one voice as Africans and embracing diversity through developing a joint Afro Feminist Manifesto on Data Futures, which can help African feminists engage policymakers to create a safe online space and establish proper accountability channels. Participants engaged in an interactive breakaway session to define Afro-feminism. Most participants linked Afro Feminism with the black movement, identity, reclamation, power and representation. There was consensus that there is power in naming oneself as this represents the ideology and how movements are built. Lack of identity will muddle the advocacy struggles and increase the likelihood of underrepresentation.When negotiating with policymakers, understanding the subtleties of oppression and how different individuals experience various nuances of prejudice is essential. It allows interaction with all tiers of authority by giving the movement a name. Hence, Afro Feminism is significant during advocacy and movement building.

The conversation continued and focused on re-envisioning the future of data for women in Africa. A key highlight from this was how the economic status divide has enabled how people experience Artificial Intelligence, with communities from under-deserved communities being greatly affected as their sense of agency is not a priority. Artificial Intelligence ethics cannot be fully independent if data sovereignty is still a challenge within the continent. This is why from the participants' perspective, Africa needs to create its own data infrastructure. It was also emphasized that the internet is real life, and the violence that happens online, at the state level, in the streets and at home. Feminists have more possibilities to fight for policy implementation the more platforms they open up for discussion of online violence.

Day 2 focused on highlighting the findings and insights of Afro-Data governance from Pollicy's perspective. Pollicy researchers discovered that the data collected from three African nations: Zambia, Kenya, and Cote d'Ivoire, is not gender disaggregated and that the issue stems from the design of the data-gathering methods. The key message from this segment was, "Start Calling People Out." Communities believe that when they provide their own data, it will be used to improve the lives of women and girls who are facing an increased risk of gender-based violence. The participating community, however, is unable to access the data once it has been collected due to the language barrier, lack of technology to access the analyzed data, and occasionally the bureaucracy set up by the research group.Since the communities are the data source for the study, it is important to inform them about the research's findings, particularly in regards to issues including violence against women and girls.

The session concluded with the design of the Afro Feminist Data Futures Manifesto that spoke to 11 key points mainly that the internet should be a safe space and women and girls do not need to log off because they are triggered whenever data, tech and discussions come up. To achieve digital safety, there is a need to collectively dismantle patriarchy and work in silos. Centering joy is also part of self-care and should be embraced whenever possible.

Breakaway Sessions

Session 1: Role of AI in the Future of Work for Women in Africa for Future-proof Skills

This session focused on the intersection of AI and future-proof skills for women in Africa. Participants explored the potential of AI to shape the future of work for women and discuss the skills and competencies needed for success in the rapidly changing world of global work. They had the opportunity to learn about current AI initiatives and successful skills development programs and initiatives for women in Africa. The session provided actionable strategies for developing AI solutions that are gender-responsive and culturally appropriate, as well as strategies for addressing barriers to skills development, such as gender stereotypes and unequal access to education and training. The ethical considerations and potential risks of AI in the context of work for women, including issues related to bias and discrimination, were also highlighted.

This session was opened by Cecilia Nyawira (Head of Executive Search, Aga Khan University) and it was stated that people have been fearing a reduction in job opportunities yet the advent of AI presents an opportunity for job creation. It was highlighted that people should not view technology as a competitor rather it should be viewed as a complementary tool and the importance of data use to make strategic decisions.

During discussions with the participants, it was proffered that there is a need to sensitize women in rural areas about the product and process of building AI to ensure inclusivity. The governance and the structures around AI policies in Africa have not evolved as fast as the technology has and this is a collaborative effort between private and public arms as it cannot be the work of one arm. Policies and frameworks at both regional and national levels need to be developed to address gender issues in AI and guide its ethical use. Participants also highlighted that African culture and its documentation are crucial for AI training to avoid biases and ensure contextual relevance. Additionally, innovation in AI should consider and respect African culture rather than replace it. There is a lack of diversity in language representation in AI systems, which needs to be addressed.

Key Action Points from the participants' plenary session were as follows:-
- Foster innovation that incorporates and respects African culture, ensuring that AI development and deployment are culturally sensitive and relevant.
- Prioritize the documentation and preservation of African culture in AI training to mitigate biases and foster contextual understanding.
- Encourage the representation of diverse languages in AI systems to ensure inclusivity and accessibility.
- Higher level sensitization for data collection so that innovation is embraced

Session 2: Collecting data using the Internet of Things

This session was led by Latiff Cherono (GearBox) and it primarily focused on how collecting data from Internet of Things (IoT) devices brings various benefits, but it also presents certain risks and challenges related to bias. Some of the dangers associated with bias in IoT data collection would be , Data Incompleteness, Sampling Bias (inclusive of Gender Bias), Selection Bias, Algorithmic Bias, Contextual Bias, Privacy, and Ethical Concerns.

It was highlighted that IoT is focused on providing solutions where problems exist. It provides better-quality models and solutions. There has been slow uptake by African countries on the use of IoT for digital transformation and as such there is a need to create IoT models that do not mirror the West in trying to solve sector-driven local challenges.IoT enables comprehensive and quick collection of data and without proper safeguards, the impact/consequences of this data remain unmitigated. The challenges surrounding data were highlighted to include;

- Data source – Are we asking the right audience? Are we collecting the right data to give right insights, is there data bias? Is variance accounted for? Are we asking the right question?
- Data collection: - Automated or manually transmission.
- Data analysis and insights: - Does analysis allow for content? Are the right insights being derived?

Participant discussion further revealed that Artificial Intelligence systems may experience bias based on the design. The Engineering field is predominantly male and this influence AI. The danger associated with bias in IOT data collection include;

- Selection bias – methodology and learning bias, Data incompleteness, sampling bias, and Gender bias.
- Algorithmic bias
- Contextual bias- Integrate technology starters with knowledge on how to locate contextual bias.
- Privacy and ethical concerns.

It was further highlighted that data safeguarding remains a big challenge in the incorporation of IOT in innovation. There is a need to incorporate privacy by design in IoT so that by the time the systems are developed then privacy is still envisioned. The impact of data governance cannot be left to chance.

Key Action Points from the participants' plenary session were as follows:-

- IoT is very dynamic and changes fast depending on the challenges of the day and there is a need for continued policy and regulations update to deal with emerging issues.
- There is a need for integration by innovators and privacy practitioners to ensure both data subjects and innovators are protected and to enhance data governance practices in the sector.
- Advocacy, education and mentorship for more women to join the engineering field will create a more gender diverse field and subsequently address the existing data gender gaps. There is a need to include data privacy courses for students in universities as future innovators to ensure that the issue of data governance is inclusive and adopts privacy by design.

Session 3: Bias in the data pipeline: Learning how to ask the right questions of your dataset

This was a practical workshop co-hosted by Open Cities Lab and ToroDev. In this hands-on workshop participants were guided through the process of identifying, exploring, and evaluating the quality of datasets from a gender standpoint. This practical training aimed to equip participants with the necessary skills to delve deeper into individual datasets, recognize key elements that may indicate biases or gender sensitivities, and comprehend how these disparities manifest throughout the entire data pipeline—from hypothesis formulation and data collection to analysis and visualisation. Participants had the opportunity to reflect on the study report done by Open Data Analytics on "Urban Data Governance in Uganda's new cities; while looking at the implication of findings and recommendations to the region"

In this workshop it was highlighted that Data pipeline includes the collection of data (assess credibility and accuracy of the data), cleaning & verification (How effective was the collection process what inaccuracies exist that may compromise the integrity of the data), analysis (Assess patterns from the data and what is hidden in plain sights) and Reporting /visualisation. In today's data-driven world, ensuring the integrity of our data is of utmost importance. The implementation of robust data pipeline systems becomes essential to achieve this goal. By having proper data pipeline systems in place, we can efficiently and securely manage the flow of information, from its initial collection to its storage and analysis, without compromising its accuracy or reliability.

This ensures that the insights and decisions derived from the data remain trustworthy and valuable for businesses and organisations.

Participants' input emphasised how context is king when it comes to assessing data and shaping how we perceive our realities. You cannot look at a data set solely to give a clear picture. There is also a need to remove yourself from the privileges and question the experience of minorities. Data is key in shaping decision-making. However, data collection remains decentralised with most available datasets being centred around health and food security. There is a need to explore new technologies and collect defined data on other impactful areas.In closing it was also stated that data governance ought to include harmonisation of data management methods and tools to minimise multiplicity and create a more streamlined system.

Key Action Points from the participants' plenary session were as follows:-
• The need for prioritising the establishment of reliable data pipelines to safeguard the integrity of our valuable data assets.
• There is an opportunity for researchers to expand their research on other issues affecting urban authorities. This includes collaborative efforts between stakeholders to come up with a regional data governance framework.
• Increased call for funding of Data Protection Commissions/ Offices across the continent to enable them to execute their mandate and more so create awareness on data governance issues.

Session 4: Building Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Tools to Detect Online Violence against Women.

This practical workshop on Text Classification and NLP was co-hosted by Pollicy and Open Cities Lab. This workshop focused on the research conducted on online violence against women politicians in Kenya in the 2022 General Elections and the use of AI/ML tools to detect and prevent such violence. Panellists discussed the methodology and findings of the research, including the prevalence and impact of online violence against women politicians, as well as the opportunities and challenges of using AI/ML tools to address this issue. Participants had the opportunity to learn about successful interventions and strategies for preventing online violence against women

politicians on social media platforms, as well as to discuss the ethical considerations and limitations of using such tools in this context. The workshop also addressed the broader implications of online violence against women politicians for democratic processes and gender equality.

It was highlighted that building artificial intelligence and machine learning tools is crucial in detecting and addressing online violence against women. There is a need to address the limitation of Natural Language Processing (NLP) in accounting for the diversity of African languages. Panellists emphasised how online harassment of women in politics during the 2022 elections in Kenya is a significant issue that requires attention and action. Additionally it was stated that AI and ML tools can play a vital role in identifying and combating online harassment of women in politics. This is why collaborative efforts are necessary to develop effective AI and ML solutions that are culturally sensitive and address the unique challenges faced by women.

Key Action Points from the participants' plenary session were as follows:-
- Invest in research and development to enhance NLP algorithms and technologies that can effectively handle the diversity of African languages in detecting online violence against women.
- Implement the recommendations outlined in the 2023 report on byte bullies and online harassment of women in politics during the 2022 elections in Kenya, including policy changes, awareness campaigns, and support systems.
- Foster partnerships between technology experts, women's rights organisations, and political institutions to develop and deploy AI and ML tools specifically tailored to detect and address online violence against women in political contexts.

Day 2

The second day of Datafest Africa Nairobi was mainly a continuation of the Afro Feminist Data Futures Festival workshop, breakaway sessions and the closed Funders and Partners Roundtable.

Feminist Technology Funding & Collaboration Roundtable

This workshop brought together funders and partners to explore opportunities for collaboration in supporting feminist technology projects and activism that promote gender justice. Participants had the opportunity to engage in critical conversations and interactive activities to explore how feminist principles and practices can be integrated into technology and advocacy funding and collaborations in the civil society sector in East Africa. Through small group discussions and case studies, participants explored topics such as the challenges and opportunities of feminist technology funding, strategies for building effective partnerships, and best practices for evaluating the impact of feminist technology projects. The workshop also addressed the importance of centering the experiences and voices of marginalised communities in funding decisions and project implementation.

This workshop was kicked off with a presentation by Neema Iyer that introduced what feminist technology is and presented a number of case studies. She highlighted the feminist principles of the internet and spotlighted some works done by Pollicy including but not limited to VAWP in KE/TZ and VOTE: Women as a Response, Digital Threats to Muslim Women HRDs and Future of Work and Engendering AI. The session's objective was to have an interactive workshop where funders and funding partners discuss how they envision the future of feminist technology and how success of that envisioning looks like. This culminated in small group discussions that required the funders to reflect on how Feminist Technology can advance their strategic goals and further addressed the challenges and opportunities in funding and promoting feminist technology initiatives.

The session closed with a plenary on the pathways to success in world cafe style. Each funder and participant identified how they can actively contribute to achieving sustainability for feminist technology initiatives in direct alignment with their current organisational goal and strategy. It was agreed upon to produce a working document that all funders would contribute to at a later stage.

Breakaway Sessions

Session 5: Innovative pathways to digital resilience for women at work

This was a live podcast session hosted by Cecilia Maundu, Digital Rights Researcher, Digital Dada Podcast. This live podcast recording looked at new and creative ways to cultivate digital resilience in the workplace, with a focus on women. It also brought to life conversations on how alternative approaches can be adopted to empower women, enhance their digital skills, and enable them to better navigate and thrive in the rapidly evolving digital landscape of the modern workplace, while exploring how traditional approaches may not be sufficient, resulting in the

need for innovative strategies to address the unique challenges and opportunities women face in the digital realm.

This session had 21 attendees and it was highlighted that digital resilience for women at work is crucial in ensuring their safety and participation in the digital space. The future of work, particularly in fields like journalism and data science, is increasingly digital, presenting both opportunities and challenges for women. Discussions reflected that access to affordable gadgets and internet connectivity is a significant barrier to digital resilience, particularly for women in low-income communities. Emphasis was on how policies and laws should be in place to address cyberbullying and harassment, with a focus on simple language and effective enforcement. Collaboration and involvement of diverse stakeholders, including academia, is necessary to foster innovation and develop effective strategies for digital resilience.

Key Action Points from the participants' plenary session were as follows:-
• Implement comprehensive training programs to enhance digital literacy and enable women to identify and combat misinformation.
• Advocate for policies that promote affordable access to gadgets and internet connectivity, particularly for women in low-income communities.
• Foster collaboration between stakeholders, including academia, to develop innovative solutions for digital resilience, focusing on "Made in Africa" innovation and human-centred design.

Session 6: Advancing Data Justice in Africa

This workshop was led by the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). Its objective was to map the intersection of social justice and data in Africa, and how this impacts communities. Participants were introduced to the six pillars of data justice (power, equity, access, knowledge, participation, and identity) and how they can be applied to activism, policy-making, and technology design to ensure equitable and rights-based data collection, governance, and use in increasingly dynamic data and innovation ecosystems.

It was highlighted that data justice goes beyond data protection and privacy and encompasses equality participation and diversity. It calls for research with the objective being to widen the lens of current thinking around data justice to provide actionable guides that will help policy makers, practitioners and impacted communities gain broader understanding of what equitable, freedom promoting and rights sustaining data collection, governance and use should look like in increasingly dynamic and global data innovation ecosystems.

The key pillars of data justice were presented as ;
• Power:- Interrogating investment power i.e. who funds data collection, who can own the data collection tools, which dynamic is the data reached? Explore power imbalance, political, gender, regulatory. Marginalised groups don't have power on the Data life cycle.
• Equality:- Include representation of marginalised groups to eliminate single lens view.
• Access:- Transparency in the data ecosystem empowering data subject.
• Identify:- Prioritise the material preconditions of data justice and challenge formalist and ideal approaches. E.g. failing to recognize persons With Disabilities (PWD) as a different identity with different lived experiences.
• Participation:- All communities engaged in data collection should be recognized in the agenda and their views included.
• Knowledge:- Embrace the pluralism of pieces of knowledge recognizing that diverse forms of knowledge and cultures influence community principles.

Continuation of discussions revealed that the pillars of data justice make it possible to measure the impact of data governance or data life cycle and eliminate any biases in the data governance system. As you collect data it becomes imperative to assess intersectionality and impact value by creating a robust data governance system, ethical policy tools, and inclusivity in the data system ecosystem. This is achieved by creating public value for data collection; collaborative efforts by end users, data collectors & policy makers and strengthening data governance systems in Africa to reduce the risk and power imbalance currently enjoyed by states and big technology.

Key Action Points from the participants' plenary session were as follows:-
• There is a need to evaluate the power imbalance that exists between different African nations with competing interests and the counterproductive implication in regional data policy formulation.
• Promote public participation in data governance - Participatory data governance is inclusive of public view at the commencement of the process and not just at the tail end as a formality. It includes capacity building to empower the public and build their understanding of data governance issues.

Session 7: Identifying Data Ecosystems

The session, led by Development Initiatives, explored the transformative power of their data landscaping model. The session examined governance, policies, legislation, strategies, political economy, data diagnostics, and the demand and use of data. Participants were presented with practical examples and case studies that demonstrated the effectiveness of the model in unlocking the potential of data-driven decision-making.

Collaboration with government entities was identified as crucial in developing inclusive data charters and plans for collecting comprehensive national data, particularly for marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities. Understanding the data value chain at the lowest level of governance is essential for identifying gaps in data collection and infrastructure and developing context-specific solutions. An assessment of the value of aid in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia revealed challenges including a lack of transparency and duplication of efforts, highlighting the need for improved coordination and accountability. Conducting data landscaping exercises helps to demystify the complexity of data ecosystems and emphasises the diverse range of organisations, datasets, and reports involved. Building strong relationships with data producers and improving data capacity were identified as key factors in leveraging the potential of data in Africa.

The participants' plenary session resulted in the following key action points:
- Invest in improving data infrastructure at the lowest level of governance, including connectivity and data collection tools, to ensure reliable and efficient data collection processes.
- Encourage transparency, coordination, and accountability among aid organisations by implementing mechanisms to assess and evaluate the value of aid efforts, aiming to eliminate duplication and maximise impact.
- Promote data literacy and understanding by conducting data landscaping exercises, creating awareness about the complexity of data ecosystems and the diverse organisations involved.

Session 8: Visualising for Change: Using Infographics and Data Stories to Advocate for Gender Equality

This session was co-hosted by Pollicy and the Evidence and Methods Lab. The session gave the participants an opportunity to immerse themselves in the art and science of transforming both quantitative and qualitative gender data into compelling infographics and data stories. The heart of the session was a hands-on activity where participants will work in groups to create a visual narrative using both quantitative and qualitative gender-related data, illuminating key issues and conveying a potent feminist message.

The panellists highlighted that the primary goal of data visualisation is to help individuals make sense of large amounts of data by organising it in a way that is more easily digestible. It allows for more efficient analysis and decision-making by allowing users to quickly identify patterns, correlations, and outliers in their data. Types of visuals: Charts, diagrams, illustrations, photographs - Data stories can create emotional connections and generate empathetic reactions from its receivers. It is important to use bite sized data to visualise information because the more the information you are dealing with, the more difficult it is to filter down to the most important bits. There are still gaps in capacities despite access to and proficiency in data visualisation tools.

The participants' plenary session resulted in the following key action points:
- Inclusive data visualisation for gender equality is an important equity issue and provides exciting research opportunities.
- Researchers and practitioners are called upon to agree on the needs of gender equality.
- A good visualisation does not need explaining as the infographic gives the interpretation just by looking at it.

Session 9: Gender Equity, Data Governance, and Digital Transformation

This session led by African Internet Rights Alliance (AIRA) highlighted advocacy efforts by some AIRA members for an East Africa regional policy on data governance. This AIRA Talks provided an opportunity for AIRA members in Kenya to reflect on the state of data governance policy in Kenya, with a key focus on gender-responsive governance.

It was presented that African data protection frameworks borrow heavily from EU's GDPR which was drafted with European businesses and citizens in mind and are largely influenced by their cultures. This means that while the GDPR provides a comprehensive framework it does not take into consideration the unique African context on gender and digital rights perspective. By replicating this framework we fail to address local data challenges and adopt Eurocentric views. Data in household contexts such as sharing of intimate pictures and other cultural practices that perpetuate GBV ought to have been included in the DPA with penalties for crime and offences.

It was also highlighted that there is a high cross-border flow of data especially through commerce yet they lack proper framework in existence currently. For the harmonisation of cross-border data management, we need regional data governance laws to promote trade and innovation. The common standards will promote these regional economies. Lack of awareness and clarity on data governance has caused mistrust and encouraged non-participation in Data collection exercises. So many people are ignorant or nonchalant of their digital rights. There is a need to raise awareness in a simplified manner that can be understood by local mwananchi and empower them with tools that enable them to deal with data governance issues. This includes translating content and working with community and religious leaders at grass-root levels.

Data Protection has been viewed from commercial lenses and it's not evident how other data processors such as academic institutions and religious institutions are held to account. Children's rights are also not well addressed by the existing data governance regimes since children cannot legally consent to the collection of their data. Gender cannot be an afterthought and should be included in the data governance design. Gender data should be collected when necessary and should always be treated as sensitive data if the overturn of the Roe Vs Wade decision by the US Supreme Court is anything to go by.

The participants' plenary session resulted in the following key action points:

- Need to lobby the adoption of AfCTA Agreement by all African Countries.
- We need to move away from elitist data governance discussions and adopt means and mechanisms that can be understood by common citizens at grassroots level through capacity building and engagements.
- Data issues are gender issues and by failing to include gendered voices, we risk having biased output that do not reflect the needs of our communities.

Session 10: Charting the Digital Future: Spotlight on Africa Data Governance Hub

DataFest Africa 2023 drew to a close with an intimate fireside chat and cocktail event. This special evening offered a chance for participants to engage in enlightening discussions over cocktails, all under the theme of "The Future of Data Governance in Africa," spotlighting the Africa Data Governance Hub.

This occasion provided an ideal platform for engaging with diverse stakeholders, stimulating thought-provoking discussions, and igniting potential collaborations. It all aligned with the core pursuit of establishing the hub as an indispensable resource for data governance in Africa.

All participants received goodie bags, which included a flyer detailing the Africa Data Governance Hub. This flyer contained short profiles of the partnering organisations (Pollicy, Niyel with funding support from Hewlett) on how to engage further with the hub's content. It also guided attendees on how to sign up, upload their own content, and join the community to foster a stronger connection with the cause.