

African School on Internet Governance

November 2024

Participant evaluation

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) hosted the 12th African School on Internet Governance (AfriSIG) in Addis Ababa from 14 to 19 November 2024. This report presents the findings from an evaluation of the workshop based on views of participants. The views were collected through a questionnaire that participants, including faculty or resource persons, completed online. A total of 57 people (22 faculty and resource persons and 35 fellows) participated in the School, of whom 22 fellows answered the questionnaire. Three of the responses were from fellows who also acted as resource persons.

Of the 22 responses, four people were from Uganda, three each from Kenya and South Africa, and two each from Nigeria and Tanzania. In addition, there was one participant from each of Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Two thirds (16) of the responses came from members or staff of civil society organisations, three each came from academics or members of the technical community, and two each from business or consultants. In addition, there were responses from one government official, one parliamentarian and one representative of a development agency.

All ratings were on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being Excellent and 1 being Terrible. The figures below show both the mean and the median score. The mean is derived by dividing the sum of the scores by the number of scorers. The median is the score given by the middle person if scores are ordered from lowest to highest. For example, if there are five people with scores 10, 9, 8, 1 and 1, then the median is 8, while the mean is 5.8. Unlike the mean, the median is not affected by one or two outliers, i.e. people who score very differently from the rest of the group.

In reporting on the open-ended questions, all responses are considered and reported on, whether through paraphrasing or direct quotes. The responses reported as direct quotes include some cases where the meaning was not clear; the direct quotes avoid the analysis reflecting a “guess” as to what the meaning might be.

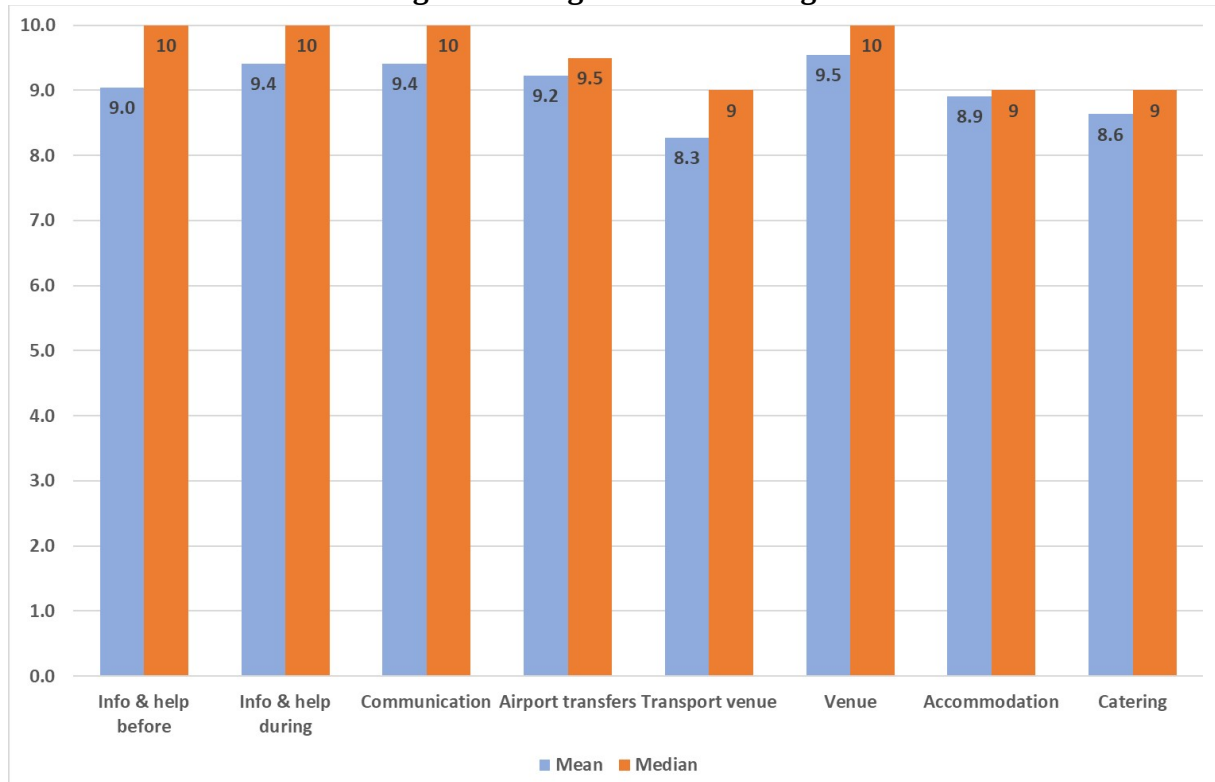
Organisation and logistics

The first set of questions related to organisation and logistics. The questions read as follows:

- How would you rate the information and assistance received before AfriSIG?
- How would you rate the information and assistance received during the course?
- How would you rate overall communication with participants before and during AfriSIG?
- How would you rate the arrangement of airport transfers?
- How would you rate the arrangement of transportation to and from the venue?
- How would you rate the course facilities – venue, meeting room?
- How would you rate the hotel accommodation?
- How would you rate the catering (tea, lunch and dinners)?

Figure 1 shows high ratings for all items, with the median never falling below 9, the second highest score. In relative terms, transport to and from the venue, accommodation, catering and the venue scored a little lower than other items. The overall pattern is thus of slightly higher scores for the items over which AfriSIG had the most control. The lowest individual ratings came from one person who rated transport to and from the venue at 3, and another who rated catering at 3. This can be attributed to the fact participants had to either walk or arrange their own transport to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Conference Centre for three days of the School. The return walk was uphill and, considering the high altitude in Addis Ababa, quite demanding.

Figure 1. Organisation and logistics



The section on organisation and logistics ended with an open-ended question asking for further comments. Seven people answered this question, with a further two noting that the survey forced them to rate items that were not relevant for them individually. Two people offered nothing but positive affirmation – one for “excellent” organisation and logistics, and the second a more general comment on the “wonderful learning experience”. Two further people began their comment with a compliment about the good organisation. However, one went on to suggest that time management could be improved, and the second that faculty would have been able to prepare better if they were informed about the programme, responsibilities and expectations in advance. One person felt the hotel transfers and arrangements before the programme were “fairly well done”, but the food became monotonous because of a non-changing menu and limited time to source their own food outside the venue.

Both the remaining comments related to transport difficulties. One person was unhappy about walking 15 minutes before and after “hectic” sessions. This person also observed that a smaller establishment might have maintained the accommodation facilities, and especially the bathrooms, better than the Hilton Hotel did. The second person noted significant difficulties

with the transport arrangements between the Hilton and the African Union and U N ECA Conference Centre.

Workshop content

The next set of questions asked about workshop content, with a score requested for each session separately. The sessions that were scored were as follows:

DAY 1

SESSION 1: What is internet governance?

SESSION 2: Data governance: Concepts, issues, challenges and opportunities.

SESSION 3: Digital trade, data and the digital economy

SESSION 4: Perspectives on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

SESSION 5: Data governance in Africa initiative of the AU and the EU Global Gateway

DAY 2

SESSION 5a: Internet names and numbers and the institutions that look after them

SESSION 6: Access and after access: Facing facts and understanding digital inequality in Africa

SESSION 7: How the internet works: Internet architecture and core protocols

SESSION 8: Meaningful connectivity and community-driven connectivity solutions

Note: The planned Session 9 was cancelled so as to allow more time for the practicum.

DAY 3

SESSION 10: Human rights and digital rights: A global perspective on institutions and processes

SESSION 11: Human rights and digital rights: A regional perspective

SESSION 12: Current challenges in internet policy and regulation: Harmful speech and dis/misinformation

SESSION 13: Digital inclusion, gender equality and diversity in the context of internet governance

SESSION 14: Internet governance and media development diversity and freedom in Africa

DAY 4

SESSION 15: Cybersecurity and cybercrime in Africa: Challenges and opportunities

SESSION 16: Current challenges in internet policy and regulation: Corporate accountability

SESSION 17: AI governance: What is it really? What are our priorities in Africa? How do we respond without becoming distracted?

SESSION 18: Climate change and internet governance

DAY 5

SESSION 19: The UNESCO Internet Universality Indicators: What they are and how to use them

SESSION 20: The World Summit on the Information Society, its review, and the Summit on the Future and the Global Digital Compact

SESSION 21: The Internet Governance Forum: What to expect, how it works and how to participate

There was also a daily Q&A (question and answer) session to review the previous day's content, and a practicum that involved multiple sessions spread over the days of the workshop.

Figure 2 gives the ratings for sessions on days 1 and 2. Six sessions had a median score of 10, implying that at least half of the respondents gave the highest rating possible. For all other sessions the median was 9.5 or 9. The lowest scorers in terms of the mean were the sessions on internet architecture and protocols and on internet names and numbers. Both of these sessions had a mean of 8.9. No one scored any of these 8 sessions lower than 5.

Figure 2. Rating of sessions on days 1 and 2

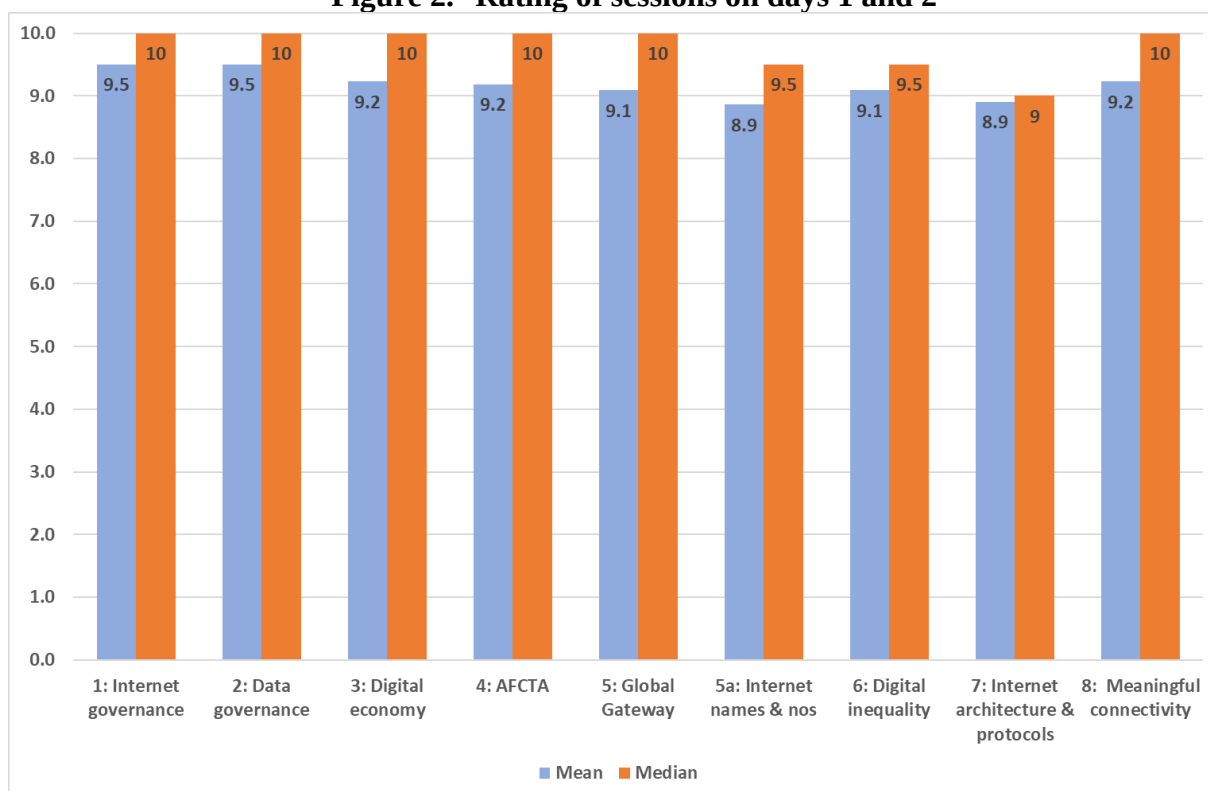


Figure 3 gives the ratings for days 3 and 4. The sessions on digital rights at global and regional level had at least half of the respondents giving the highest possible rating. Again, all other sessions had a median score of 9.5 or 9. The lowest mean score was again 8.9. This mean was found for only one of the sessions, namely the one on cybersecurity and cybercrime.

Figure 3. Rating of sessions on days 3 and 4

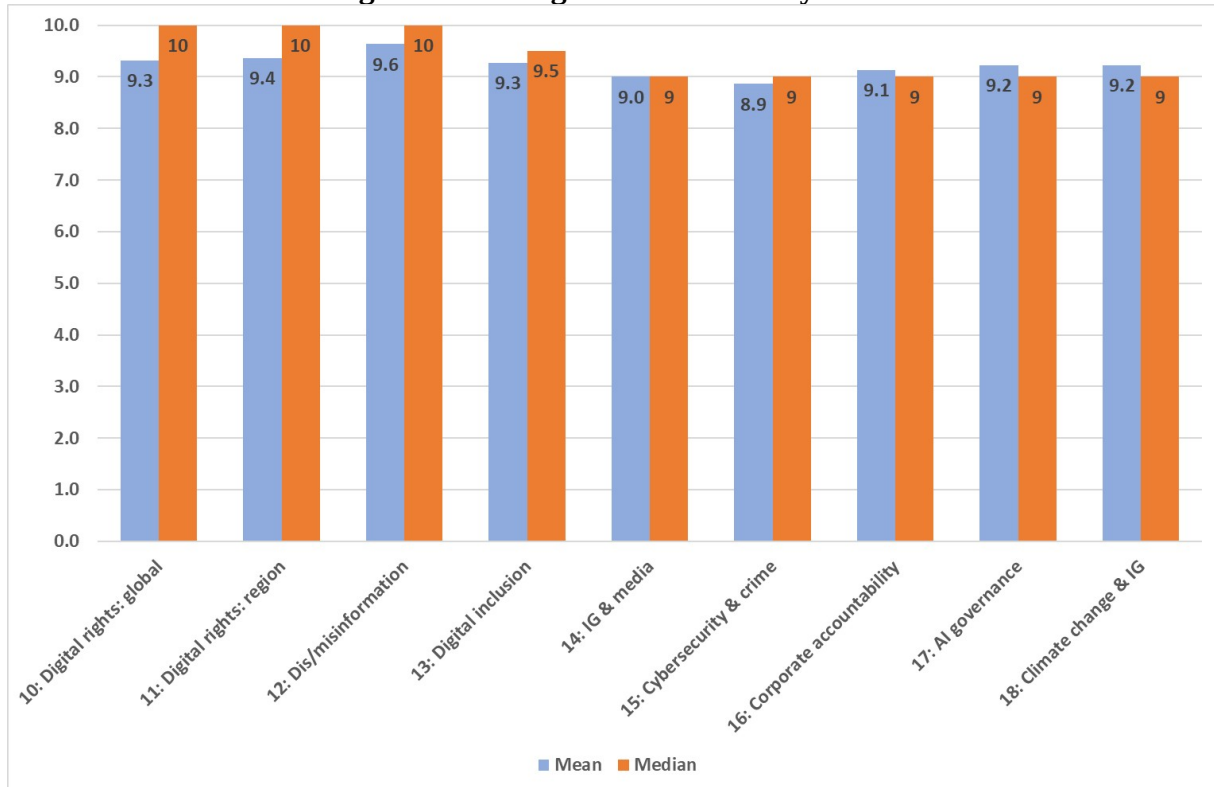
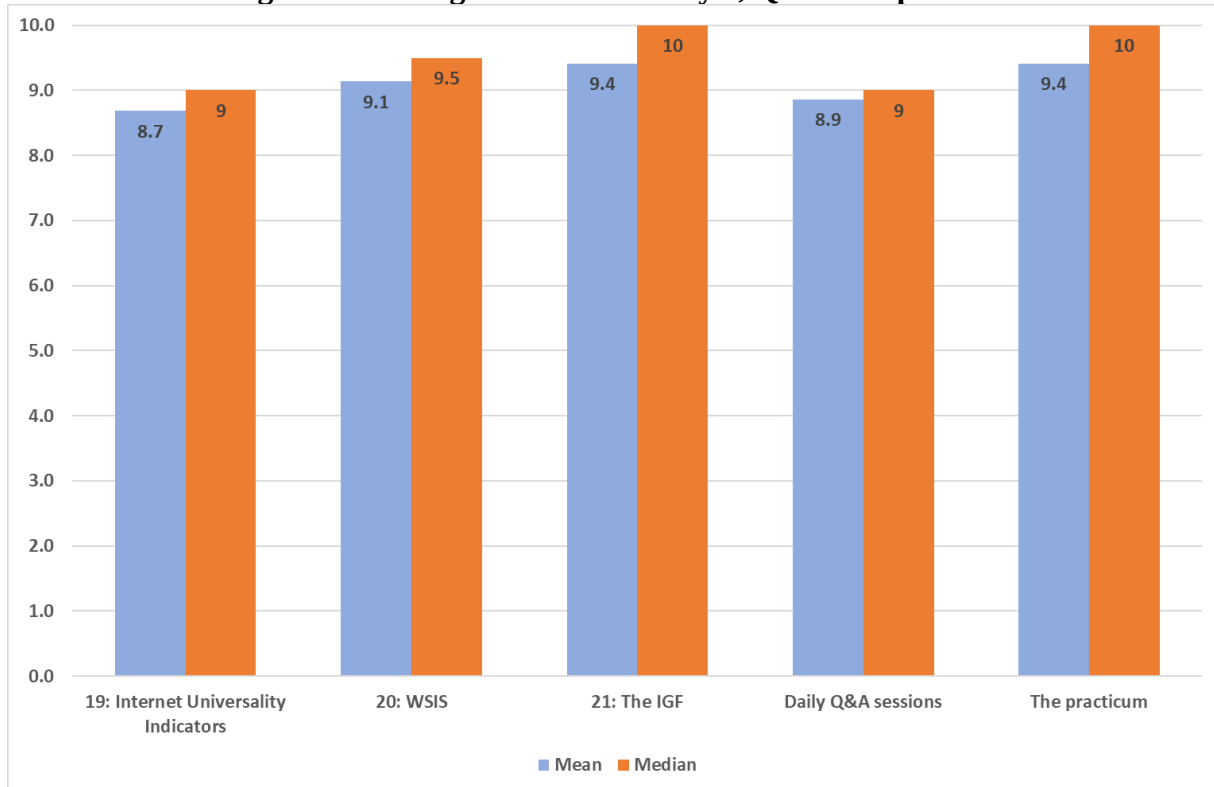


Figure 4 shows the ratings for the sessions on the final day of the practicum, as well as for the daily Q&A sessions and practicum. The practicum and the session on the IGF scored the highest, with a median of 10 and mean of 9.4. The session on UNESCO’s Internet Universality Indicators had the lowest mean of all sessions of the workshop. This session was also one of only a few across the whole School to earn a rating of 4. However, the relatively “low” mean score is a still high, in absolute terms, at 8.7. The daily Q&A sessions were also among the lower scorers overall, with a mean of 8.9 and a median of 9.

Figure 4. Rating of sessions on day 5, Q&A and practicum



The session-rating questions were followed by an open-ended question asking for **further comments on the workshop sessions**. Nine people took up this offer, of whom eight focused on the practicum. The ninth person may also have been referring to the practicum as they asked that “next time” the organisers explain “deeper” what is expected of each group and the overall aim.

The eight other commentators were overwhelmingly positive about the practicum experience. One “absolutely loved” it, a second “enjoyed” it and found the role playing particularly insightful, two people declared it “one of the highlights”, a fourth person commented on the excellent organisation, several noted that the practical nature of the exercise was especially important, while others commented on the value of the opportunity to experience collaboration with others with different backgrounds, ideas and experiences. Two people had suggestions for the future. The first suggested that additional time be added for group discussion and mentorship. The second suggested that “topical discussions” could have been shared a week or two before the School to allow the participants to engage more deeply with the topics. The following response, reproduced in full, illustrates many of the issues raised by others:

Contributing to the development of the practicum was the highlight of my experience at the School. It provided a unique opportunity to collaborate closely with my team, allowing us to exchange ideas and perspectives. This hands-on approach underscored the value of teamwork in tackling complex issues. Engaging with the AU Data Policy Framework during this exercise was very enlightening, as it was my first time reading deeply into this important document. The practicum not only deepened my understanding of the framework but also equipped me with practical skills that I can apply in future endeavours.

Participants were then asked if they had any **suggestions for additional topics**. Eight people responded, two of whom had three suggested topics each. The responses included suggestions related to digital security. One wanted to learn about practical solutions for protection of young people online, the second wanted more detail on protection of personal data from a human rights perspective, the third suggested surveillance as a topic, and the fourth digital safety and security in terms of both devices and persons.

The remaining suggestions, of which many relate to policy, were as follows. Some of the suggested topics were already covered to some extent in the programme. Participants suggesting these topics might therefore have been asking for more on these particular topics:

- Promotion of digital innovations so that communities across Africa can tap into their own potential and thrive
- Freedom of expression online
- Internet governance-related laws and policies
- Climate change and internet governance
- More practical sessions on digital policy implementation
- Internet governance in the context of Africa's digital economy
- Strategies for youth engagement in policy-making processes
- Case studies on successful policy implementation in Africa.

The final set of ratings related to the **process and impact** of the School. The questions asked were:

- To what extent were you satisfied with the level of interaction and participation in the sessions?
- To what extent were you satisfied with the facilitation and facilitators?
- To what extent were you satisfied with the structure and logical flow of the sessions?
- To what extent has the workshop increased your knowledge of multistakeholder processes for internet governance?
- To what extent did you find the information and resources on the AfriSIG website useful?
- To what extent will you be able to apply the learning obtained?
- To what extent will you be able to pass on the learning obtained to your colleagues?

Figure 5. Rating of process and impact of the School

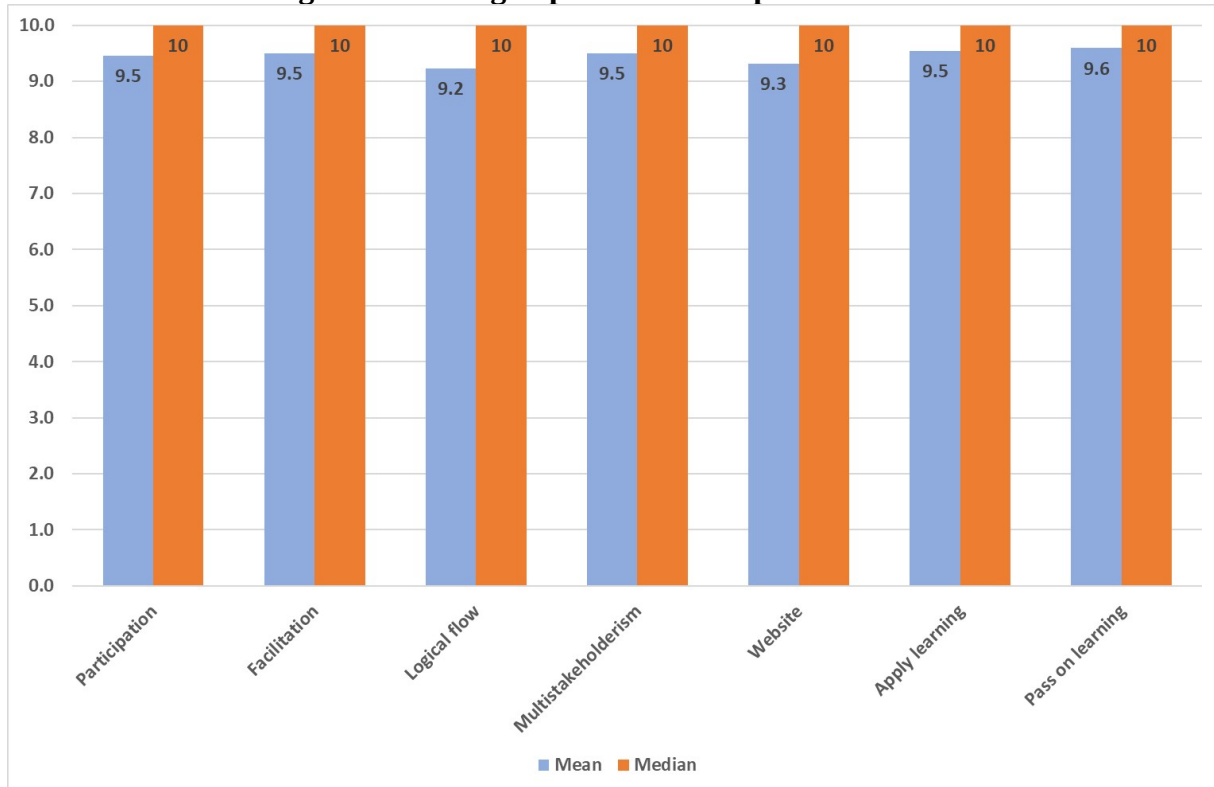


Figure 5 shows an even better picture than for the previous rating questions. All questions had a median of 10, meaning that at least half of respondents gave this rating. The mean was 9.2 or higher for all questions. The lowest individual rating was 6, the rating given by a single individual for only one item, namely that relating to the website.

Nine people responded when asked if they had anything to add on the facilitation. Three of the responses did not focus specifically on the facilitation. The first of these noted simply that AfriSIG 24 was “excellently organised”, the second that they were “a transformed person” after all they had learned at the School, and the third – somewhat similarly – that the training had “had a huge impact on my career.” This person went on to say that they had already contacted their local internet governance forum (IGF) team and national Internet Society (ISOC) chapter to express their interest in getting more involved in the internet governance space. The person was also planning to include internet governance issues in their teaching.

The comments on facilitation were all complimentary, ranging from a simple “good job” to “outstanding”, “excellent” and “superb”. One person highlighted approvingly the use of interactive techniques to increase participants’ involvement and interest. This person also appreciated the friendliness and experience of the facilitators. Finally, another participant who appreciated the experience and energy of the facilitators noted that, unfortunately, they were dealing on a personal level with a stressful situation and thus could not focus on the School as much as they would have liked. They said any challenges they encountered were due to this rather than anyone else’s shortcomings.

Eleven respondents gave qualitative responses in the area of **process and impact of the School**. Some gave concise verdicts, such as “Great impact to be honest” and “Very successful and impactful”, while others wrote several paragraphs. The only suggestions for improvement related to the length and intensity of the School. Two people suggested a longer

duration, so as to have more time to cover the material, although one recognised this would have cost implications. The third suggested reconsideration of the sessions scheduled after 18h00. A fourth suggested follow-up after the School to ensure that people used the knowledge and skills that they had learned.

Some of those who gave longer responses highlighted particular aspects that they appreciated. These aspects included the mix of both theoretical and practical learning so that both knowledge and skills were gained, the wide range of issues covered, the experience of collaboration (for example in the practicum), the opportunities for networking, and the contribution to informed decision making on the continent.

Participants were then asked what the **most valuable learning experience or outcome** of the event had been for them. This question generated 14 responses.

Four people named the practicum as the most valuable learning experience. One of them elaborated that this “hands-on exercise was incredibly insightful, as it allowed me to navigate the complexities of reaching consensus among a diverse group of stakeholders, including civil society, government, business, academia, and the technical community.” The practicum also gave participants the opportunity of working together in solving problems.

Four people highlighted the opportunity to meet and engage with a varied group of people – and in particular the experts and facilitators – from different backgrounds and with different types of expertise in different fields.

Many said that the knowledge gained meant that they were now more confident of their ability to engage on internet governance issues. Some noted specific issues on which they now felt more confident, such as data governance, data privacy, cybersecurity, digital rights, multistakeholderism, and a rights-based and equitable approach. One noted that exposure to additional aspects had laid the basis for their further exploration through additional reading.

Three or four of the responses referred to greater understanding of the need for and/or ability to promote equitable, inclusive solutions. One noted: “It was my first time leaving my country for a worthy cause (cause? course?) [...] I learnt how to make good decisions and policies for the benefit of a larger community.”

As many as 16 participants answered the question on how they were **planning to use the learnings** from the School in their work. This was therefore the open-ended question that generated the most responses.

Two participants reported that they had already shared some of their learnings by reporting back to others on what they had learned. One submitted a blog post in which she had done this, while the second – a government official – had submitted a report on AfriSIG to their own ministry as well as to the prime minister and presidency of the country.

At least eight people said that they would pass on their learnings to other people. Three were planning to do this by expanding on the scope of what they or their organisations were already teaching. One planned to recommend AfriSIG to others, but also to teach others – in this case seemingly outside of a formal teaching context. Similarly, another participant had already started preparing a schedule of educational talks, role plays and workshops for use in all their associations and with their colleagues. One participant planned to share their

learnings through national, regional and international forums by facilitating workshops, participating in panel discussions, and contributing to policy dialogues. Yet another said they would share what they had learnt through capacity-building workshops, community outreach, and active participation in internet governance forums. Finally, another participant hoped to organise workshops and mentorship programmes targeting young women and marginalised communities.

A good number said they would use the knowledge and skills gained to promote more equitable policy making, whether through advocacy, research, their organisation's communication strategy, or involving groups such as women and youth in internet governance-related activities, or through direct involvement in policy-oriented discussions in internet governance forums, parliament or elsewhere.

At least three participants gave indications of wanting to continue expanding their knowledge and skill on the topics covered in the School.

The penultimate question asked participants how they had experienced the **networking during AfriSIG** and how this might be of value to them in their future work. There were 13 responses to this question. One of these was the same blog post provided in response to the previous question.

One person felt that the networking was “the most outstanding part of the training” and would help them when they worked in different countries. Several said that they had met many new people and hoped to remain in touch with them – and perhaps even work with them in future. One suggested that the WhatsApp group be maintained for this purpose.

Several participants commented approvingly on the rich variety of participants in the workshop – “so many insightful individuals who are doing impactful work”. One commented that their networking experience at the School “was one of the most beautiful in terms of diversity of skills, points of view, analysis and above all collaboration. I met equals, elders of mixed backgrounds who are very open and humble...” This, combined with the diversity of topics covered, had opened up new issues on which they wanted to focus going forward.

Other participants commented on how interaction with the varied group had built supportive relationships that would strengthen their future work in a range of different ways. As one person expressed it, they now had access to “resources, expertise, and potential collaborators who can support my ongoing projects and initiatives in digital governance and data policy.” Similar comments were made by others. In general, the diversity of stakeholder categories was highlighted more than the different countries or national experiences.

Many participants were pleased with the opportunity to share their own experiences and knowledge as well as listening to others. One commented, appreciatively, that participants were “kind and respectful”, suggesting that the usual hierarchies might not have been as much at play as they might be in other settings.

The final question offered space for **additional comments, feedback, and suggestions** for future improvement. Only five people answered this question, of whom three offered suggestions.

The comments were all complimentary, and repeated earlier comments about the value of the School both for the individual participants and in terms of building “a cadre of people looking to make a difference.” One person noted: “I was really grateful for the chance to take part and am looking forward for the next meeting.”

The suggestions included the usual one for more time and a less pressured pace to allow for “minimum rest”. Other suggestions were:

- Consideration of parallel sessions, and thus smaller numbers and greater opportunity for participation.
- Further support, such as covering the costs of the African IGF for participants if possible, as it served as a further practicum. Ideally, this person wrote, there would also be “a DSA [daily subsistence allowance] or even modest upkeep” for participants with limited resources.
- More real-time case studies and simulations, and more time allocated to cooperative problem-solving exercises or group projects.
- Dissemination of some of the reading materials in advance.

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