11ᵗʰ African School on Internet Governance, Abuja, 13-18 September 2023

Participant evaluation report - Prepared by Debbie Budlender

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The Association for Progressive Communications (APC), the African Union Commission (AUC) and Research ICT Africa, convened the 11th African School on Internet Governance (AfriSIG) in Abuja, Nigeria from 13-18 September 2023. AfriSIG 2023 was organised in collaboration with Paradigm Initiative, the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Parliamentary Track and the hosts and organisers of the 2023 African IGF, the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Nigerian Communications Commission, and the African IGF secretariat and Multistakeholder Advisory Group. The theme of this year's AfriSIG was the African Union's Data Policy Framework. 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 42 people (excluding faculty and resource persons) participated in the School, of whom 24 answered the questionnaire. One of these responses was from a faculty member. A second faculty member submitted a late response which could unfortunately not be included in this report. All responded in English.

Among those who gave their country, five were from Kenya, four from Nigeria, three each from South Africa and Zimbabwe, and two from Cameroon. Malawi, Namibia, Senegal and Uganda each accounted for one respondent.

Half (12) of the participants who responded were from civil society organisations, three identified themselves consultants, three were from the media, and two were parliamentarians. There were also one regulator, one civil society activist, and one lawyer.

All ratings were on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being Excellent and 1 being Terrible. Many figures 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. 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 all the cases where the meaning was not clear to avoid the analysis reporting a "guess" as to what the meaning might be.
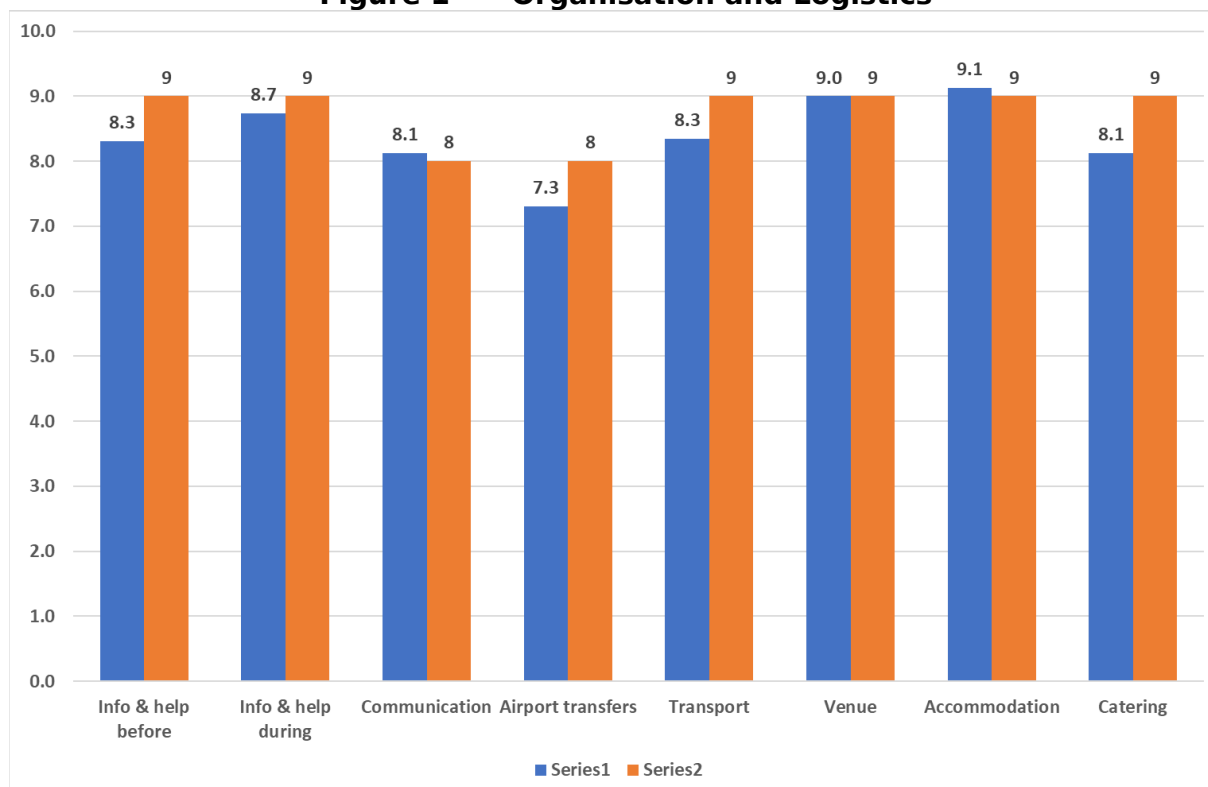
Organisation and logistics

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 overall lower ratings were giving to organisation and logistics than to other issues rated during the evaluation, as will be seen below. Nevertheless, the median rating for six of the eight items was 9, the second highest rating possible. Thus at least half of respondents gave a rating of 10 or 9 for these items. The remaining two items – airport transfers and communication – had a median of 8. Airport transfers were the least satisfactory item, with a mean of 7.3, nearly a full rating lower than the next lowest mean of 8.1. The venue and accommodation had mean scores of 9.0 or more, indicating very high levels of satisfaction. All items except venue and accommodation had at least one rating below 5. Transport had one rating of 1, i.e. "terrible".

Figure 1   Organisation and Logistics

The section on organisation and logistics ended with an open-ended question asking for further comments. Nine respondents answered this question.

Most of the responses related to transport. In particular, there were complaints about visas. These included being unable to get a visa in advance because of intermittent connectivity at the embassy, more timely responses from the organisers in respect of visas, and not receiving feedback about reimbursement of visa costs if the sending organisation did not cover these costs. One person complained that they were booked on an itinerary that took them through Addis Ababa, and thus spent two days travelling to AfriSIG rather than the two hours required for a direct flight. It is important to note that their travel was not arranged by AfriSIG but by another institution. Another noted that despite not travelling by air, the online form required that they answer the question on airport transfers before they could submit.

One person commented that the accommodation was "great", despite slow shower drainage, but that a variety of non-spicey meats should have been available for those who could not manage repeatedly eating spices.

The three general comments (including one from someone with a transport complaint) were complimentary. One person simply wrote "good". The second commented on the good preparation and the teams "resilience to ensure everything was in order". The third thanked the team for the "commendable" planning, the hard work, and the opportunity to participate more generally.

Workshop content

The next set of questions asked about workshop content, with a score requested for each session separately.
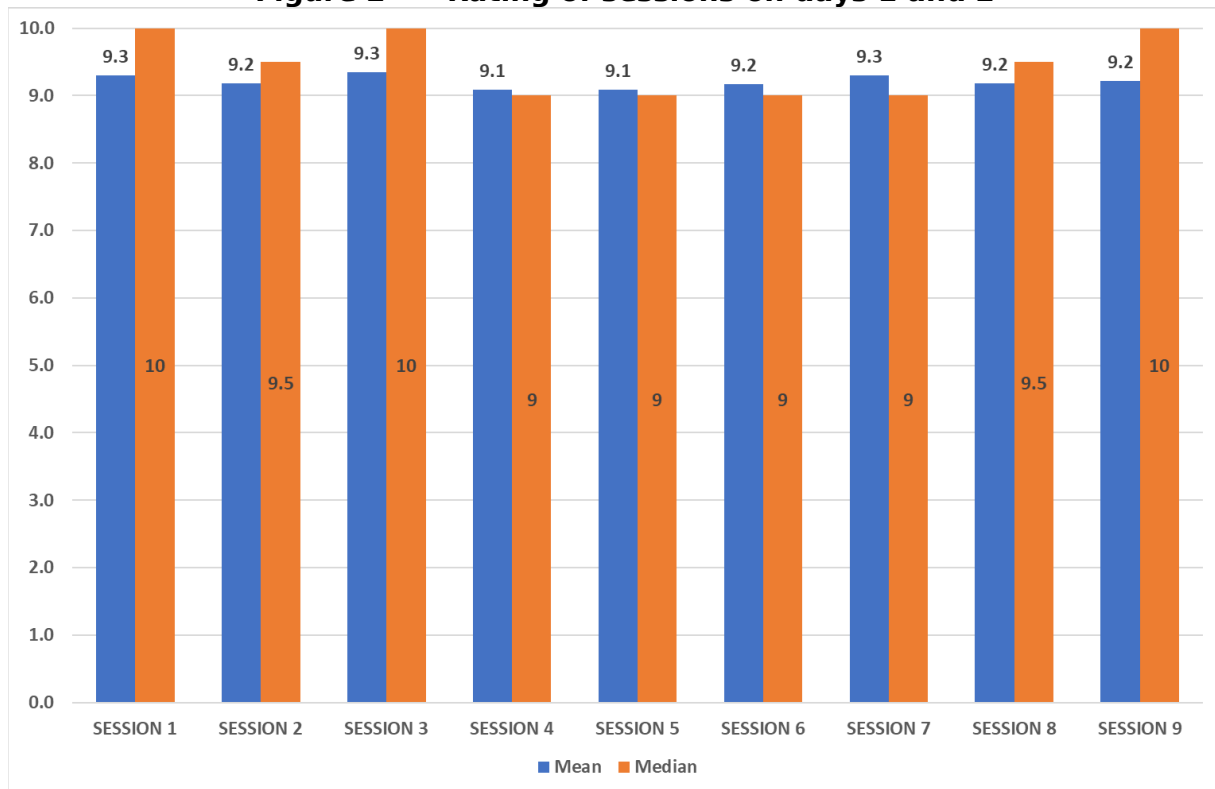
Days 1 and 2

DAY 1
SESSION 1: What is internet governance? History, issues and why it matters for social, political and economic development in Africa
SESSION 2: Digitalisation, data and the digital economy in Africa
SESSION 3: Data and development: Concepts, issues, approaches and the state of data policy in Africa and the 2022 AU Data Policy Framework
SESSION 4: Overview of the IG ecosystem in Africa: The institutional context at national, regional and global level, strategies, roles, relationships and the multistakeholder approach

DAY 2
SESSION 5: The state of access in Africa and the power of community-centred connectivity: How the unconnected are connecting themselves and the story of the Kenyan Community Network License
SESSION 6: The African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression (2019).
SESSION 7: A human rights-based approach to access to the internet and internet governance: Principles, frameworks, laws, mechanisms and institutions
SESSION 8: Digital exclusion, gender equality and diversity in the context of internet governance

SESSION 9: The internet, media freedom and diversity and the safety of journalists in Africa

Figure 2 gives the ratings for sessions on days 1 and 2. For three sessions – session 1 on what is internet governance, session 3 on data and development, and session 9 on media freedom – the median was 10, implying that at least half of the respondents gave the highest rating possible. For all other items the median is 9.5 or 9. (The median of 9.5, when responses are all round numbers, is explained by these questions having an even number of respondents. In these cases, the median is the mean of the two "middle" values – which in two cases were 10 and 9 respectively.) All sessions had a mean greater than 9.

Figure 2   Rating of sessions on days 1 and 2

Days 3 and 4

DAY 3
SESSION 11:   How does the internet work?: Internet architecture and core protocols
SESSION 12:   Internet names and numbers and the institutions that look after them
SESSION 13:   In conversation with Nigerian internet governance practitioners
SESSION 14:   Current challenges in internet policy and regulation: content, platforms and AI
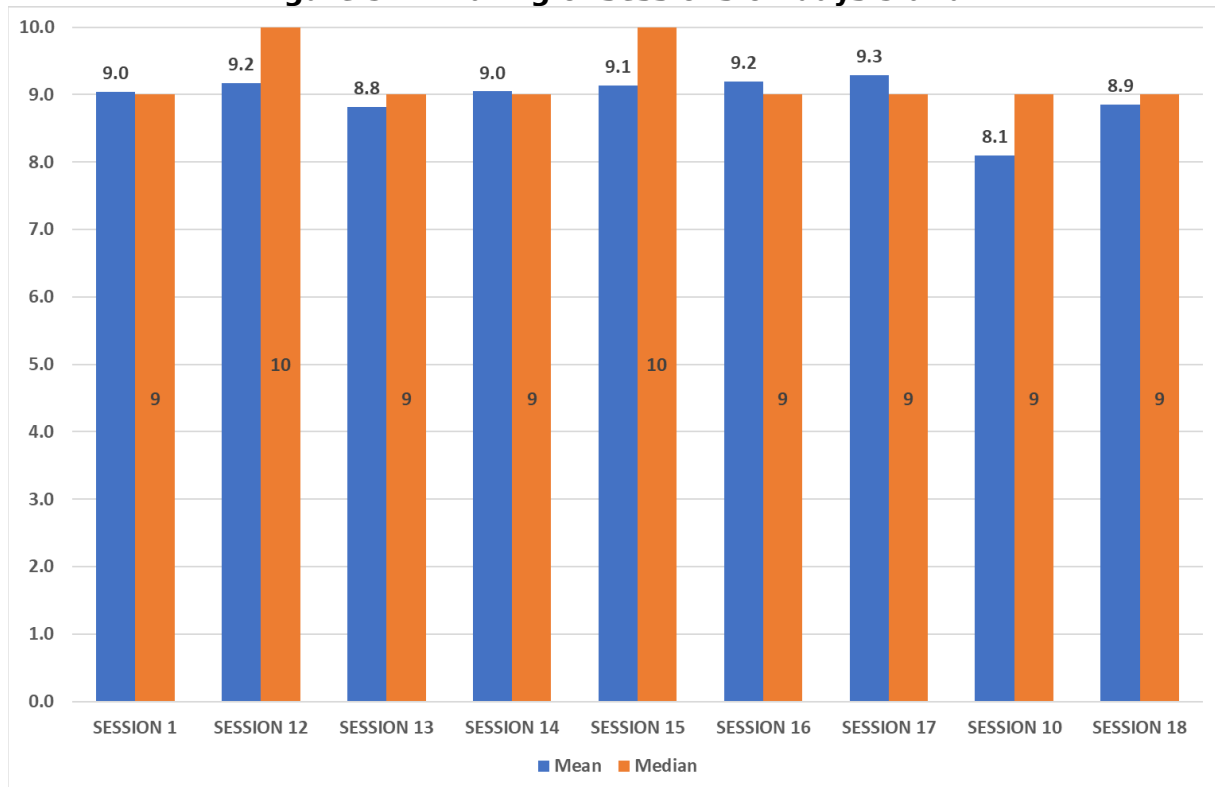SESSION 15:   Data localisation and sovereignty, trends, opportunities and risks

DAY 4
SESSION 16:   Current processes in global and regional cybersecurity and cybercrime
SESSION 17:   Cybersecurity and cybercrime: A regional perspective
SESSION 10:   (Moved from Friday) Climate change, tech, internet governance, development and the green transition: Key challenges and opportunities
SESSION 18:   The UNESCO Internet Universality Indicators: What they are and how to use them.
SESSION 19:   Human-centric and human rights-based approaches to cybersecurity capacity development in Africa – do they help or hinder in relation to the goal of a secure, stable cyberspace in Africa? What roles do we all need to play in this process?

Session 19 was subsequently moved to Day 5.

Figure 3 gives the ratings for days 3 and 4. Here two sessions – session 12 on internet names and numbers and session 15 on data localisation and sovereignty - had at least half of the respondents giving the highest possible rating. For this set two sessions had means below 9, with session 10 on climate change (which was moved from another day) having a mean of 8.1. This is still an excellent score, but the mean was lowered by one rating of only 2, two ratings of 5, and one of 6.

Figure 3   Rating of sessions on days 3 and 4

Day 5, daily Q&A, and practicum

DAY 5
SESSION 20:   Overview of what to expect from the African IGF and the rest of the Parliamentary Track
SESSION 21:   Data governance: Access to information, data protection and data flows: Challenges, trends and opportunities from an African perspective with an emphasis on the role of parliamentarians (keynote address by Advocate Pansy Tlakula)
SESSION 22:   Presentation of the output document of AfriSIG 2023 – Guidelines to multistakeholder implementation of the African Union Data Policy Framework – The role of parliaments
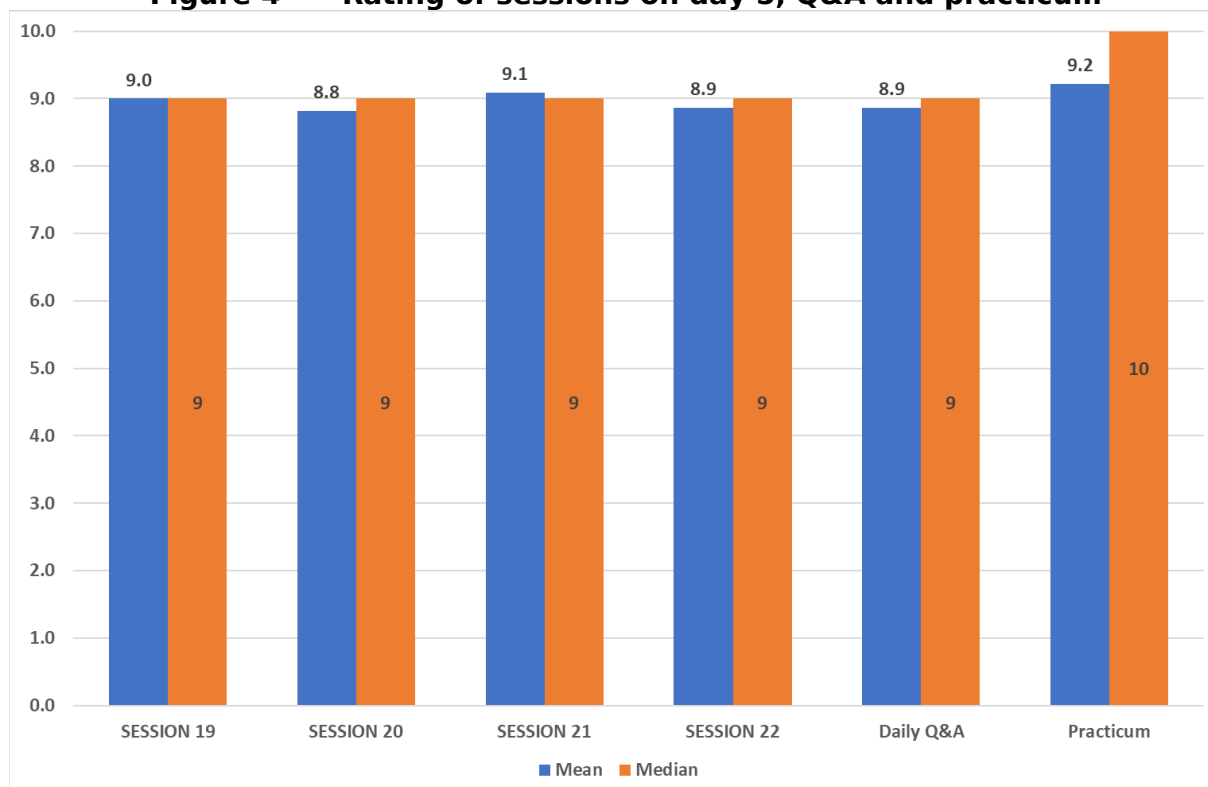PARLIAMENTAR Collaborative session between IGF Youth Track and IGF Parliamentary Track
Y   TRACK
SESSION:

There was also a daily Q&A (question and answer) session to review the previous day's content, and a practicum which ran from day 2 to day 5 and included working sessions in the evenings.

Figure 4 shows the ratings for the sessions on the final day, as well as for the daily Q&A sessions and practicum. The practicum emerges as the clear "winner" in this group, with more than half of participants giving the top score, and a mean rating of 9.2. All the other questions have a median of 9, and means that are very close to 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**. Only seven participants provided comments, among whom one – a civil society-based digital rights activist educator – provided a very lengthy response focused primarily on data issues. The long response referred to the importance of consensus, the treatment of digitally encoded genetic data and whether this should be extended beyond humans, data standards that do not always meet the specific needs of Africa, and the need for a mechanism to facilitate cross-border data flows within Africa.

One person commented that the sessions complied with the 5Ps of AfriSIG 2023, in that they were "participatory, practical, people-centred, well planned, and properly executed". Another person also commented on the good planning, and noted that while it was difficult "especially in this part of the world", to have good time-keeping, the organisers did an "incredible job" in achieving this, while still welcoming all opinions. A third respondent noted simply that the sessions were "good". Two people commented, positively, on the fullness of the programme. One described the sessions as "gruelling", but said that was to be expected. The person enjoyed, in particular, the teamwork and "mix-matching of skills and expertise" that the sessions required.

Additional topics

Participants were then asked if they had any **suggestions for additional topics**. Nine people responded, of whom one said that it was "already intense enough" without adding further topics. A few among the remaining eight suggested more than one topic. Some of the suggestions referred to topics already included in AfriSIG23, but where respondents wanted further discussion.
Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital sovereignty were each named twice. Other topics, each with one mention, were:
- Multistakeholderism and internet governance.

- Internet shutdowns
- Digital media regulation
- Information systems and business analysis in regards to Internet governance
- Internet of Things and its governance in Africa
- Emerging technologies.
- Labour laws in the internet space.
- Misinformation and disinformation
- Surveillance capitalism and the role played by major tech companies, with particular focus on the impact on women
- Technical training on cybersecurity and digital hygiene.

Process and impact of AfriSIG2023

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 multi-stakeholder 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?

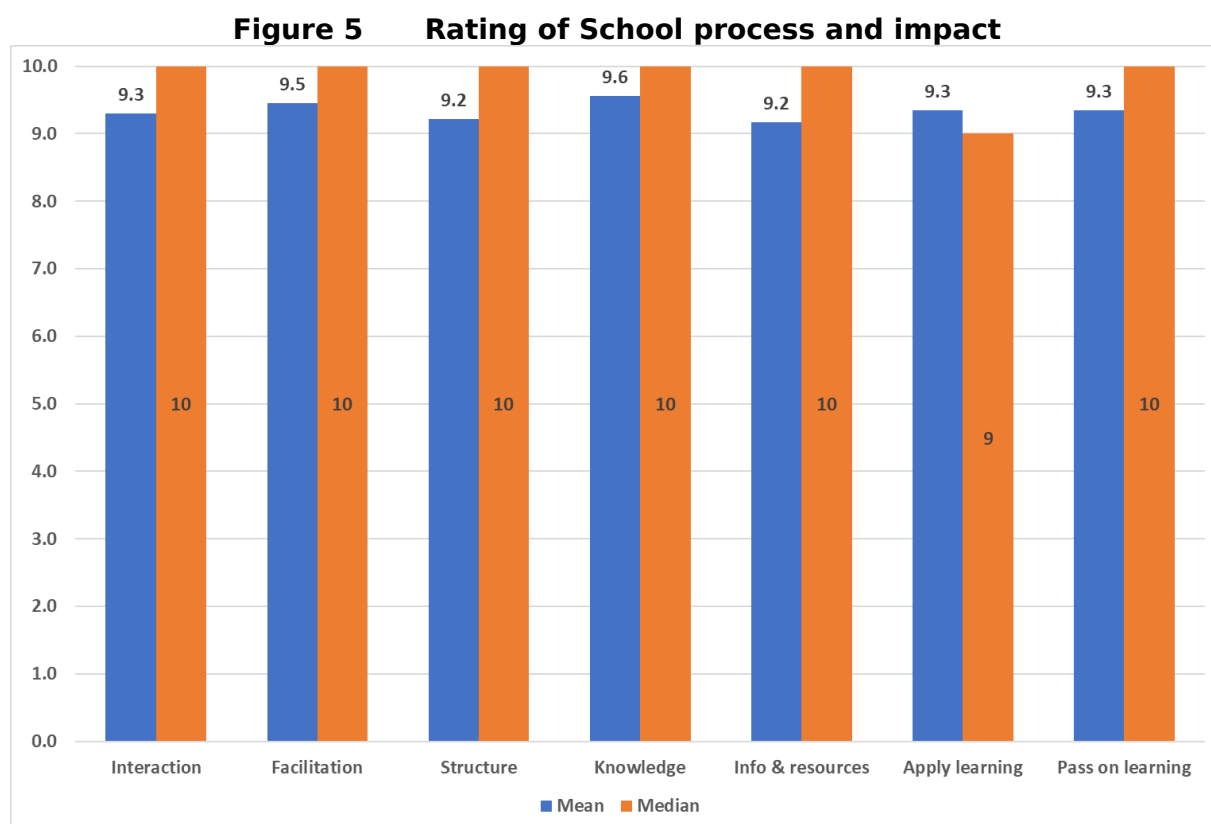**Figure 5   Rating of School process and impact**

Figure 5 again shows high scores overall. For all questions except application of the learning the median was 10, meaning that at least half of respondents gave this rating.

For application of the learning, the median was still very high, at 9. The mean for all seven questions was above 9. The information and resources question had one rating of 5. For the other questions, the lowest rating was 7 or 8.

Four people responded when asked if they had anything to add on the facilitation. However, one of these reported plans to draft a blogpost on the practicum topic (implementation of the African Union Data Policy Framework (AUDPF)), without commenting on the facilitation. The remaining three commented, in different ways, on the high quality of the facilitation. One was pleased with the range of different facilitators. The second said that the facilitators were "well sourced, very humble, listens and willing to help. The third thanked all the facilitators for their "exceptional contributions... Each of them demonstrated a deep knowledge of the subjects they covered, making the learning experience both engaging and insightful."

One response paid special tribute to Anriette, as follows:

> *I particularly appreciated the efforts of our capable lead moderator Anriette, who skilfully clarified and simplified complex topics in the post-presentation discussions. This approach made it much easier for all participants to grasp the key takeaways and engage in meaningful dialogue. Anriette's dedication to enhancing our understanding was truly valuable and greatly appreciated.*

Seven respondents gave qualitative responses in the area of **process and impact of the School.** Only one of the comments was negative, in that the person felt that the School "felt rushed", with insufficient time for "deliberation".

Two people offered thanks for the knowledge and skills which had made them an internet governance policy advocate or "champion in my country and Africa at large". Another two were especially grateful for the sessions on data governance, data protection and cybersecurity. One of these noted that they had personal experience of being a "cybercrime victim" and Folake's session, in particular, was thus "highly relevant" both personally and for their work. One person thanked the organisers for covering the cost of fees and "even catering for all our expenses".

Participants were then asked what the **most valuable learning experience or outcome** of the event had been for them. This question generated more responses than most of the other open-ended questions, with 15 responses.

The longest response is reproduced in full as it highlights a range of different things that the person concerned valued having learned:

> *Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the diverse governing bodies within the internet landscape in Africa and the crucial lesson that, in many cases, even imperfect laws are superior to the absence of any legal framework. This insight extends beyond mere considerations of political rights and justice, encompassing social and economic rights as well as the necessary regulations to address disparities and empower individuals to exercise their rights effectively. I've also acquired a profound understanding of the workings of the digital economy in Africa, which encompasses aspects such as trade, taxation, and sustainable development. These insights have significantly enriched my perspective on data governance and policy in the region.*

Among the others, four people valued what they had learned about the importance and potential of multi-stakeholderism, with a further two valuing the practicum where they gained practical experience of this way of approaching things. Three people

valued the exposure to, and interaction with, people of diverse backgrounds, outlooks and knowledge.

Four people expressed appreciation of the knowledge gained across all the sessions. One of the four noted that they had already been working in the area of ICTs and internet "but each and every session that was covered expanded my knowledge about digitalisation in all its dimension starting from, internet governance, how the internet works, human rights, safety and security among others." Another noted that it both "covered everything on internet governance in five days", but also brought together "researchers, civil societies, law makers, professions and people in government."

Four people particularly valued what they had learned about cybersecurity, cybercrime and data policy frameworks. Finally, each of the following was named once:
- the potential for positive change in Africa if major stakeholders and CSOs "raise their game"
- the opportunities for collaborative work at national and regional level
- the skill needed in putting together a policy-influencing document.

Similarly, 15 participants answered the question on how they were **planning to use the learnings** from the School in their work.

One person, despite not having specialised in internet governance work, had multiple plans, one of which was to become a specialist. The plans included applying the cybersecurity guidance and resources in their personal and organisational work, conducting a training on data governance, writing blogs and social media posts on different topics, and attending other trainings and forums to further strengthen their "knowledge and profile".

Other people's plans picked up on one or other of the planned activities mentioned.

Five people had plans to train others so as to share their new knowledge. The target audiences included CSOs, staff of the organisation, "other stakeholders" concerned with digital rights, and journalists. One of the five conceived the planned training in the form of a national school of internet governance. Another planned to work with their local IGF chapter to organise training as well as implementation of the data policy framework.

In addition to those who referred to training, three people planned to engage in awareness raising and/or advocacy. The targets for these efforts were not specified. Three people planned to research and write on internet governance issues. One specified data protection as a particular focus. Four people wrote that they planned to use their learnings to improve their own performance in the internet governance arena.

One person planned to use the learnings from the practicum by participating in, or even leading, the drafting of their organisation's submissions on information, data privacy and freedom of expression. Another planned to introduce a dedicated Data Rights Pedagogy Department within their (feminist) organisation, using the African Union's Data Policy Framework as the basis.

The final question offered space for **additional comments, feedback, and suggestions for future improvement**. Again, 15 people responded. (There were small differences in the people who responded across the last three questions. It was only the four people who did not complete the questionnaire who did not answer any of the three questions.)

All of the fifteen responses related to the way in which AfriSIG23 had provided the opportunity for networking, and built personal and work-related relationships that they planned to build and use further going forward. A few expressed special appreciation for the opportunity to meet on more or less equal terms with people they felt were higher on one or other hierarchy, such as the expert facilitators and members of parliament.