# Stockholm Internet Forum 2023

Sida will host the eighth Stockholm Internet Forum in Stockholm,  30-31 May 2023 under the overall theme of

## ”Role of the internet and ICTs during crises, conflicts and disasters”.

Digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities and challenges. They have the potential for positive transformation, but, when "improperly or maliciously used, they can fuel divisions within and between countries, increase insecurity, undermine human rights, and exacerbate inequality."[1] Given that so many people around the world are currently living in contexts of crisis, conflict or disaster, it is vital to examine the role played by Internet and ICT infrastructure and data management systems, the frameworks and policies that govern them, and how and by whom the resulting transformations are leveraged. It is in this context that the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) will host the eighth Stockholm Internet Forum in under the overall theme of "The Role of the Internet and ICTs during Crises, Conflicts and Disasters". Cross-cutting themes are gender equality, minority rights and meaningful participation of youth.

The forum will include opening and closing sessions, high-level keynote speakers, around three (3) broader thematic sessions in plenary and nine (9) parallel sessions as well as side activities. The main sessions will be broadcast online.

Sida will also host the so-called "pre-SIF" one-day gathering 29 May 2023 at Sida's offices in Rissne (Sundbyberg), for development partners focussing on  aspects of ICT, digitalisation and safety and security.

## Three sub-themes for discussion

**I.	Tech infrastructures and systems: Access, agency, security and resilience**
This subtheme will look at the Internet and ICTs as infrastructure and services that connect people and places in times of crisis and that can build agency and resilience over time. They provide meaningful and affordable access to key services, such as access to finance; critical, timely information; support for facilitating community organising; and opportunities for young people. But infrastructure is never only about the technology; it is also about the human infrastructure that underpins and overlays it.

**II.	Information, data and media**
This subtheme will delve into the domain of the media, information, and data, their potential and risks and how to manage these in a manner that protects the rights of people affected by crisis, conflict and disaster. Inaccurate information can fuel conflict and crisis. Misinformation and disinformation distributed via social media can escalate or even incite conflict and crises. Public access to data can also aid crisis response. Collection, processing, and use of often sensitive data is invaluable in humanitarian work. Strong safeguards, tools and data management infrastructures are critical to ensure protection of the rights of those who are already vulnerable due to on-going crises. Data governance

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[1] [Human Development Report 2021-22 | Human Development Reports (undp.org)](undp.org)

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frameworks are needed to treat some data and information as public goods, for example data, on food security and nutrition. Also necessary is a global legal framework that allows for the broadest possible circulation of relevant information, while preserving the rights of the people to whom the data ultimately belongs. The private sector plays a significant role in this ecosystem - and is a key stakeholder in either enabling, or preventing online threats and harms, especially amongst the most vulnerable. Media actors play an indispensable role in gathering and sharing stories and news, but they are also at risk. Many journalists, as well as artists and scientists, are injured, hurt, or targeted by repressive forces in crisis contexts.

### III.     Normative frameworks: Ensuring rights and upholding responsibilities in difficult times

The third subtheme will explore governance, rights and responsibilities, and the role of normative frameworks in respecting and promoting human rights online and offline. Securing a free open and secure Internet and freedom of expression online in times of conflict can mean the difference between life and death. Governments – including local government - are essential for sustaining response and building resilience. Policy frameworks are needed to promote and protect the creation of digital public infrastructures and digital public goods. Engaging government is essential to ensure positive and sustained impact. Private sector actors have responsibilities too and regulatory frameworks are needed to ensure these companies understand their responsibilities, and meet them.

Tentative agenda will follow the format below:

| SIF23 AGENDA Day 1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 08:45-09:15 | Registration | | Side activities ongoing throughout the day |
| 09:15-10:00 | Opening Plenary \| High-level Discussion | | |
| 10:00-11:00 | Interactive Plenary: Scene Setter | | |
| 11:00-11:30 | COFFEE | | |
| 11:30-12:45 | Parallel Session 1-1 | Parallel Session 1-2 | Parallel Session 1-3 |
| 13:00-14:00 | LUNCH | | |
| 14:00-15:15 | Parallel Session 2-1 | Parallel Session 2-2 | Parallel Session 2-3 |
| 15:15-15:30 | pause | | |
| 15:30-16:45 | Parallel Session 3-1 | Parallel Session 3-2 | Parallel Session 3-3 |
| 16:45-17:00 | pause | | |
| 17:00-18:00 | Synthesis session | | |
| **Day 2** | | | |
| 09:15-09:45 | Plenary \| Review | | |
| 09:45-10:00 | pause | | |
| 10:00-11:15 | Regional/interest group Conversations | | |
| 11:15-11:45 | COFFEE | | |
| 11:45-13:00 | Regional/interest group Conversations | | |
| 13:00-14:30 | Lunch \| Networking | | |
| 14:30-15:30 | Closing Plenary | | |

Sida

## Stockholm Internet Forum - Background

The first Stockholm Internet Forum (SIF) was held in 2012 following a decision by the Government of Sweden. It has since then been organised on a biennial basis. The forum has become a well-established recurrent international platform for discussing digitalisation and human rights and capturing the development gains and challenges of digitalisation.

Hosted by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the key objective of the forum is to provide a collaborative platform for networking and knowledge sharing for existing and emerging actors in this space.

Objectives of Stockholm Internet Forum include providing a platform for discussing current opportunities and challenges of digitalisation, capturing key issues to consider during the development of international policy and normative frameworks, collaborating on capacity-building and development of infrastructure and systems that underpin a safe and secure digitalization, and providing a meeting and collaboration space for development partners and other actors, including both established and new/emerging stakeholders, with emphasis on those working in difficult and repressive environments.

Internet access is increasingly instrumental in achieving human rights both on-line and off-line. Although digitalisation may support democratization efforts at local, regional and global levels, the internet is also a space where repression and attacks on democracy and human rights happen. Internet access is often blocked to this end, including by government actors, and during 2020-21 more than 200 internet blackouts were recorded in 29 countries in Asia, East and North Africa. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the trend, in some instances being used as an excuse for limiting internet access of citizens.

The last four SIF facilitated by Sida, dealt with themes of Access; Access and Power; Shrinking Democratic Space Online and in 2021, Mobilising for Digital Resilience in Shifting Landscapes of the Pandemic (on-line event). SIF has supported lowering of the barriers between key stakeholders such as private sector and development partners including NGOs and human rights defenders. Therefore SIF reaches beyond other 'forum networks' and allows for breaking a relative isolation of certain actors.

Previous SIF held on-site, gathered around 500 participants from around 100 countries, of which a majority represented so-called ODA-countries[2]. The on-line edition of SIF 2021 included over 1000 participants from 120 countries, and participants at that time represented their home countries, international organisations, private sector, media and civil society.

More information will follow on the web page Stockholm Internet Forum as conference planning continues.

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[2] www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2022-23-flows.pdf