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Digital Security blogs report

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Cyber Security Trends in Zambia

Zambia's status on cyber security

Zambia has slightly over 9 million connected devices as at December 2022. This indicates a rise in internet users on a daily basis which directly spikes cybercrime more than 50% of the users have less or no knowledge of cyber-crime.

Zambia's rating on the cyber security index is moderately impressive. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Global Cyber security Index (GCI) that measures the commitment of countries to cyber security in 2020 rated Zambia's progression at 68.88 per cent from 14.7 per cent in 2014. This case as at 2022 has since been purged at 75%.

From January - December, 2022, the Zambia Computer Incidence Response Team (ZM-CIRT) recorded a cumulative number of attacks amounting to 10,718,002. The cyber threats recorded in 2022 included: mobile money reversal scams transmitted as phishing links, social media account hijacking, fake social media accounts, online harassment, fake online product promotions and Ponzi investment schemes.

In order to counter the increase in cyber-attacks, which are happening on a daily basis, government says there is need to invest in cyber security infrastructure in the country and expand cyber security awareness coverage in Zambia.

According to a statement issued by the Minister of Technology and Science On 29th March, currently Zambia stands at number 99 out of the 187 countries where cyber-crimes are high. This status is worrisome for the country. There is also a concern in the number of cases recorded by the authorities which means there are a lot more unrecorded cyber-crime cases than the ones recorded.

The Legal and Policy framework

In Zambia the ICT policy is revised every 5 years to accommodate updated inputs and modifications. In 2022, ZCSIF joined other key stakeholders at a meeting to revise the ICT policy. The final copy of the revised policy is yet to be shared with the stakeholders. The ruling political party in Zambia succumbed to pressure from civil society to repeal the draconian and controversial Cyber Security Act no 2 of 2021 which was enacted hurriedly by the past regime without following a multistakeholder engagement process as it should be. This act was received with mixed feeling the media fraternity and the human rights advocates who felt it was more of a suppression tool for those opposing the views of the ruling party. However, the CSOs in Zambia are yet to be enlightened by the government with regards the progress of the process to amend this act. CSOs have recently expressed worry as to could be the cause for the government's delay, a cry which has landed on the deaf ears of the government. The final copy of the repealed act is what every stakeholder awaits to be passed. The date is not yet known.

On 23rd December 2022, President Hakainde Hichilema assented to the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill No 25 of 2022 which repeals section 69 of the Penal Code and effectively abolishes the crime of defaming the President. This came after pressure from media who opposition political parties who were at the receiving end of the wrath of this section with arrests and charges. However, the abolishment of this section did not hold water as the government has switched to using related sections from other laws and subjecting the media and opposition voices unfair arrests and suppression of their views.

Lately the many opposition voices and media practitioners who have been arrested have been charged with hate speech according to the section 65 of the Cyber Security and Cyber Crime Act No.2 of 2021. This is despite the President's commitment to uphold rule of law and promote media freedoms and human rights made during his address at the 2021 Summit for Democracy.

Here are just handpicked cases among many:

1. In January 2023 Chilufya Tayali, aged 48, and Christopher Kapita, aged 54, were arrested for alleged offenses of Hate Speech which is contrary to Section 65 of the Cyber Security and Cyber Crime Act No.2 of 2021 and

Giving False Information to a Public Officer which is contrary to Section 125 of the Penal Code, Chapter 87 of the Laws of Zambia, respectively.

2. Other incidences where the law was used to suppress the opposition are when Police charged and arrested former Chief Government Spokesperson and Minister of Information and Broadcasting Chishimba Kambwili aged 54 of Woodlands area in Lusaka on January 26th, 2023 for the offence of Unlawful Assembly contrary to section 74 read together with section 75 of the Penal Code Chapter 87 of the Laws of Zambia and the arrest of Charles Kakula who was in police custody facing same offence.

ZAMBIAN CYBER SECURITY INITIATIVE FOUNDATION:

The Zambian Cyber Security Initiative Foundation (ZCSIF) alongside other CSOs in Zambia has been a key partner in the drafting of the Access to Information Law (ATI) and ensuring that the government is held accountable for their actions, promises and duties towards ensuring citizens experience and enjoy digital rights and freedoms in Zambia. Other cyber laws include:

1. **Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act, No.2 of 2021** which provides for cyber security including protecting persons and Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) against cybercrime.
2. **The Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No.4 of 2021** which provides a safe and effective environment for electronic transactions.
3. **The Data Protection Act No. 3 of 2021** which provides an effective system for the protection and regulation of personal data.
4. **The National Cyber Security Policy of 2021** whose overall objective is to transform the cyberspace into a safer environment in order to fully realize the social and economic benefits of ICTs.

Challenges in dealing with the threat of Cyber crimes

Absence of key national level security infrastructure such as a Centralized Monitoring Facility to enhance visibility over CII and intelligence sharing.

1. Lack of a National Public Key Infrastructure (NPKI) and Root Certification Authority (RootCA) whose installation is estimated at K123.8 million.

2. financial constraints regarding constraints to heighten consumer education and awareness the trends and prevention of cybercrimes.
3. increased forgery of National Registration Identity Cards and fraudulently registered SIM cards used in the registration of telecommunication and banking services.

Practices CSOs in Zambia have adopted to ensure a safe digital/online environment.

CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) in Zambia with the help of the Zambian Cyber Security Initiative Foundation (ZCSIF) have adopted various practices to ensure a safe digital/online environment. Some of these practices include:

Cybersecurity awareness campaigns: CSOs in Zambia have been learning from the digital safety advocacy campaign programs initiated by Zambian Cyber Security Initiative Foundation. ZCSIF runs cyber security campaigns on all social media platforms including radio and television to raise awareness on best practices in terms of cyber security. The number of CSOs in Zambia have since partnered to work with ZCSIF to assist them on digital safety matters.

Promoting secure technologies: Zambian Cyber Security Initiative Foundation (ZCSIF) has continued to provide software licenses and promote use of secure technologies that promote data privacy, compliance with regulations, enhance security and increased productivity through improved systems performance. Such Technologies include but are not limited to licensed VPN, anti-virus software, windows operating system and secure messaging applications like signal which apart from using end-to-end encryption, takes extra steps to ensure that the metadata information of its users is kept private and does not go out of its way to collect extra data on its users.

Advocating for policies and regulations: ZCSIF and other CSOs have been advocating for policies and regulations that promote safe online practices and media freedoms by working with the government, internet service providers, and other stakeholders to develop policies and regulations that protect users' privacy and security online.

Providing cybersecurity training: It is in the DNA of ZCSIF to offer cybersecurity trainings to individuals and organizations with the best illustrative and practical methods possible. ZCSIF has trained at least more than 30 organizations and individuals in their hundreds so far. This is aimed at equipping organizations and individuals with basic cyber security knowledge and tools to operate in the current digital era. CSOs in Zambia have been working with ZCSIF to bring their staff up to speed with digital trends.

How CSOs have Benefited from the Support ZCSIF has Rendered by the GIF project:

The Zambian Cyber Security Initiative Foundation has been supporting media houses and CSOs in Zambia with provision of software licenses as well as digital safety and ICT support working under the GIF project. One of the beneficiaries of the support is Daily Nation Newspaper, a voice of the opposition in Zambia with so much influence on the voting partner in an election year.

The IT Manger of Daily Nation Newspaper has expressed his gratitude and happiness towards the support and guidance ZCSIF provided to Daily Nation, Millennium and Millennium Radio (The Organizations are under his charge as they are sister companies).

He had this to say. “The Installation of the AVG anti-virus has helped us to block sites that track our activities on the web browser and the security of AVG is stronger than I expected and the VPN (Virtual Private Network) has kept us hidden over the internet. In the past we were not encrypting our data and were so vulnerable but now I can say we are not vulnerable because the VPN is definitely keeping us anonymous over the internet. Thanks to ZCSIF for having come through to assist us fix our digital safety posture”. Daily Nation Newspaper is an independent print media house with a coverage of the entire Zambia. Millennium TV Zambia is an independent TV station with coverage around the country and Millennium Radio is a radio station with coverage of half the country’s geographical space

Here are some case studies of how CSOs have benefitted from the support of the GIF Project:

- **Zambian Governance Foundation for Civil Society (ZGF)** is a local CSO working towards reinforcing community philanthropy, driving community-led development and working directly with communities. ZGF aims to grow the field of philanthropy in Zambia by encouraging community philanthropy (savings and giving) and supporting organizations dedicated to stirring communities to invest in, manage and lead their own development. With the support of the GIF Project, ZGF has been able to use a number of digital security tools and resources for community practitioners. These tools and resources have helped community practitioners to protect themselves from online threats, such as malware infection, hacking, and harassment.
- **Zambia Council for Social Development (ZCSD)**. Zambia Council for Social Development (ZCSD) is an Umbrella of Civil Society Organizations whose main goal is promoting vibrant, independent and well-coordinated civil society organization in Zambia. With the support of the GIF Project, ZCSD has had their digital safety posture improved through benefiting from the allocation of software licences and a free digital safety audit all courtesy of the GIF project. ZCSD has also been instrumental in influencing policy direction by developing policy recommendations to help the government improve the country's digital security landscape.
- **Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC)**: Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) is a state owned one stop media platform offering Radio and Television Broadcasting services in Zambia and beyond the borders. With the support of the GIF Project, ZNBC can boast of increased awareness of digital security risks, improved security practices and operating as a more secure organization as a result of digital safety trainings and software licenses offered to the organization by the GIF project through ZCSIF.

The GIF Project has made a significant contribution to the work of CSOs, HRDs and media practitioners in Zambia through ZCSIF to ensure a safe digital/online environment. The project has provided CSOs technical, and capacity building support they need to carry out their work effectively. As a result of the support rendered, beneficiary CSOs, HRDs and media practitioners are able to operate with less or no censorship.