Internet shutdowns and the future of democracy in Africa

Ventures Africa discusses internet shutdowns and the future of democracy in Africa in its newly launched 'Speak!' series. Ventures Africa Speak offers a unique angle around the key issues in policy, business, innovation, and life through the lens of the team.

Ventures Africa is an online news platform and community that produces stories about an evolving Africa, has released its newest special issue, *Speak! by Ventures Africa*. The inaugural edition is focused around 'Internet shutdowns and why this shouldn't exist in 2019 or beyond'.

Some of the core areas that are discussed explore how this increasing trend is dangerous for Africa's democratic future, what internet shutdowns cost the continent, and those who are most affected.

There are also four infographics which explain the evolution of shutdowns, what happens when its 'dark', and lastly, the duration and economic cost of disconnection from the internet.

"…There are many horrible things that happen on the ground when the Internet goes off…We've seen in DRC, we've seen in Sudan. For example, about 60 people were shot in Khartoum when the internet went off. In DRC, we know that when the internet went off there was massive election rigging and fraud. In Ethiopia, we know that when the internet went off, people were killed," said Berhan Taye of the KeepItOn campaign, a brainchild of AccessNow that is dedicated to upholding the rights that access to the internet enables.

"So for us, there is a direct correlation between shutting down the internet and human rights violations that are happening on the ground," she further explained.

Ventures Africa also spoke with James Griffiths, author of *The Great Firewall of China* about how China's brand of Internet censorship is influencing internet shutdowns in Africa, and what this influence will mean for the future of democratic institutions on the continent.

In the last five years alone, a total of 21 countries have been disconnected from the internet. An accompanying video sheds more light on just how much Africans are losing and why this needs to stop.