



GLOBAL
NETWORK
INITIATIVE

2016
ANNUAL
REPORT

C O N T E N T S

GLOBAL
NETWORK
INITIATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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MESSAGE FROM THE
INDEPENDENT CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EVERY YEAR, IT BECOMES MORE APPARENT THAT SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PRIVACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE WILL NOT COME FROM ANY SINGLE ACTOR WORKING ALONE, BUT WILL BE DRIVEN BY A SUSTAINED AND CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS AND COMPANIES. THIS IS WORK THAT GNI HAS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF SINCE 2008.



MARK STEPHENS,
BOARD CHAIR AND
JUDITH LICHTENBERG,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
UNVEIL GNI'S BRANDING.

In 2016, GNI's multi-stakeholder convening power and ability to forge agreement amongst diverse stakeholders was demonstrated in our approach to two of many urgent policy questions. The first was how to address extremist content online while respecting freedom of expression; the second, building a multi-stakeholder response to the alarming worldwide spike in government-ordered network disruptions.

Our policy brief issued in November, [Extremist Content and the ICT Sector](#), was the fruit of extensive discussions and consultation with policy makers, law enforcement and civil society stakeholders around the world. We look forward to building on these important recommendations, which both recognize the role governments have in keeping the public safe, and support the rights that underpin open and innovative societies.

2016 saw an unprecedented spike in government-ordered disruptions of communications services around the world. In response, GNI worked with the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue to issue the first-ever [joint statement](#) by internet companies, telecommunications companies and civil society against the misuse of these disruptions. The statement was part of a year-long series of collaborative learning and policy events - in Brussels, New York and at the Internet Governance Forum in Guadalajara, Mexico - on how best to respond to governments and educate them on the human rights, economic, and development harms caused by network disruptions.

We will continue to leverage this powerful collective voice in the global conversation about freedom of expression and privacy online, in 2017 and beyond.

Uniquely in the ICT sector, GNI's policy engagement with governments is informed not just by robust internal policy deliberation amongst our members, but is anchored in a set of human rights commitments - embodied in the GNI Principles - to which all our members commit.

The commitment by our member companies to implementing the GNI Principles includes participating in the GNI company assessment process, and in July this year, we completed our second cycle of independent company assessments. This confidential process provides a window for GNI's multi-stakeholder board into how companies use the GNI Principles to help respect user rights in the face of acute pressures by governments to censor, reveal user data and restrict access to services around the world. We invite you to read the [Public Report](#) of the 2015/16 Independent Company Assessments on our website.

In 2016, GNI members and staff also focused on close engagement with the seven observer companies from the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue that joined as observers in February. Our joint policy and learning work, which is detailed in this Annual Report, sets the stage for our ultimate goal of bringing their global user and customer base of some 1.5 billion customers in over 120 countries under the coverage of the [GNI Principles](#) in early 2017. This constitutes the single biggest expansion in GNI membership since its formation in 2008, and will more than double GNI's company participants. GNI has been stepping up its outreach to potential new NGO, academic and investor members in the Global South – especially those advocating for digital rights in South America, Africa, and Asia.

An important part of this outreach was the launch in 2016 of our joint fellowship program with member NGO Internews. The program supports digital rights advocates from Global South countries to participate in GNI Board meetings, policy development and learning activities. The fellowship is also a path to full membership in GNI.

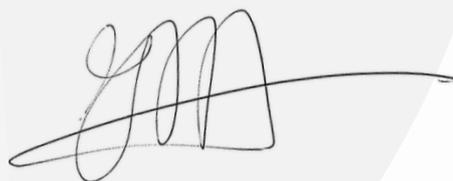
The first GNI-Internews Fellow was 'Gbenga Sesan from Paradigm Initiative, Nigeria. His work within GNI demonstrates the benefits that flow to all our members when advocates with local expertise can engage directly as part of our multi-stakeholder model. We will be building on this success in 2017/18 when we welcome two new fellows – Carolina Botero from Fundación Karisma in Colombia, and Luis Fernando Garcia from R3D Mexico.

As we look forward to 2017, we are excited at the opportunities presented by this infusion of new membership, and the deep policy expertise and rich perspectives they will bring to GNI's mission.



Mark Stephens

INDEPENDENT CHAIR



Judith Lichtenberg

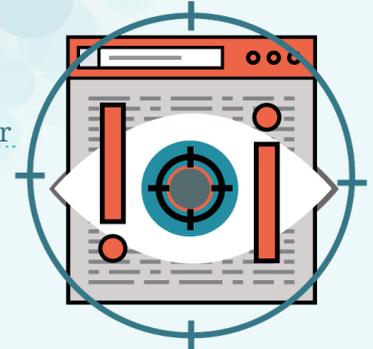
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2016

- RESPONDING TO ONLINE EXTREMISM WHILE PROTECTING FREE EXPRESSION AND PRIVACY.

The result of an 18-month long [global multi-stakeholder dialogue](#), drawing on the expertise of companies, law enforcement, governments and civil society actors, GNI launched “[Extremist Content and the ICT Sector](#)” in November. This policy brief, which has the endorsement of our diverse membership, delivers a set of key recommendations aimed at both governments and companies to promote laws, policies and practices that respond to online extremist and terrorist content while respecting human rights.

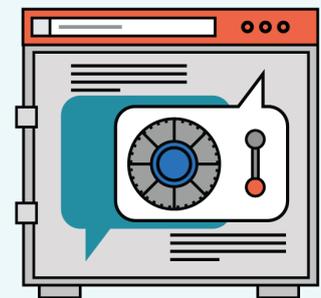
READ THE FULL SET OF GNI RECOMMENDATIONS [HERE](#).
SEE MORE ON PAGE **13**.



- INTERNET AND TELCO COMPANIES WORKING TOGETHER ON NETWORK DISRUPTIONS AROUND THE WORLD.

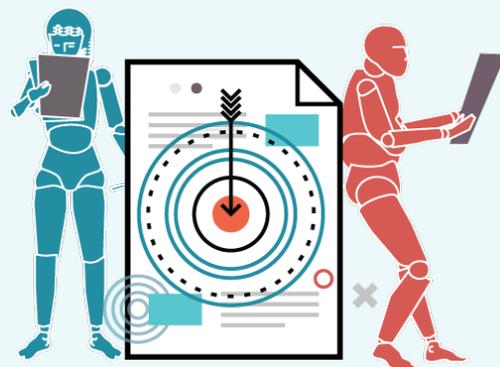
For the first time, internet and telecommunications companies joined together with civil society actors to express shared concern at the global rise in government-ordered network disruptions. The GNI [joint statement](#) with the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue highlighted the harm these deliberate disruptions cause to freedom of expression, economic development, security, and public safety. The statement is part of our ongoing advocacy to urge governments to refrain from mandating shutdowns and disruptions, including in the lead up to elections or at times of political crisis.

READ THE GNI / TID JOINT STATEMENT [HERE](#).
SEE MORE ON PAGE **14**



- COMPLETION OF GNI'S SECOND CYCLE OF INDEPENDENT COMPANY ASSESSMENTS - WITH ENHANCED TRANSPARENCY MEASURES.

The only accountability process dedicated to freedom of expression and privacy in the ICT sector, GNI completed its second cycle of [independent company assessments](#) in July. Amidst escalating challenges for freedom of expression and privacy worldwide, this assessment cycle demonstrated that member companies Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Microsoft and Yahoo are making good faith efforts to implement [the GNI Principles](#), and to improve this implementation over time. The full public report on the 2015/16 Independent Company Assessments can be found [here](#).



As part of our public reporting on the 2015/2016 assessment cycle, we introduced a set of measures aimed at increasing transparency around the assessments and the process by which GNI holds companies accountable to the GNI Principles. For the first time, GNI released supporting documents that accompanied the assessment report, including the [GNI Assessment Guidance](#) and [Reporting Framework](#), and we published an easy to read [Step-by-Step Guide](#) to how assessment works. Secondly, the 2015/16 Public Report on Assessments contains a sample of cases for the first time. Thirdly, GNI member companies communicated publicly on the outcome of their assessments, via their own individual platforms.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 11.

GNI MEMBERSHIP EXPANSION

After serving as observer members of GNI in 2016, seven members of the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue – Millicom, Nokia, Orange, Telefónica, Telenor Group, Telia Company and Vodafone Group – became full members of GNI in [March 2017](#). The expansion means that GNI will include representation from internet, telecommunications operator and vendor companies, and will extend the footprint of the [GNI Principles](#) to cover hundreds of millions more users of mobile and other communications services users across the globe.



In 2016, GNI also welcomed the Connecticut University Human Rights Institute to its expanding community, as well as two new academic members – [Dr. Richard Danbury](#) of De Montfort University in the United Kingdom, and [Professor Evelyn Aswad](#) of Oklahoma University. In addition, Change.org had its observer status term extended through 2017.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES IN 2016

IN 2016, THE GLOBAL NETWORK INITIATIVE STEPPED UP ITS GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND VISIBILITY. WE WORKED WITH GOVERNMENTS, INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION, AND BROUGHT A RENEWED EMPHASIS ON OUTREACH TO DIGITAL RIGHTS ADVOCATES IN GLOBAL SOUTH COUNTRIES.

This overview of 2016 looks at our activities and achievements from the perspective of our four interconnecting work streams: updating the GNI framework, including the core commitments contained in the GNI Principles on Free Expression and Privacy and the corresponding Implementation Guidelines – and growing the number of global users and customers covered by them; the GNI accountability process; our global policy advocacy work; and the GNI member learning program.

GNI's policy and learning focus was on the development of a collective response to extremist content online that does not harm free expression, and building a multi-stakeholder approach to government-ordered network shutdowns. We also continued with our advocacy around the new surveillance laws in the United Kingdom, which became law in November (the Investigatory Powers Act 2016), and our internal deliberations on cross-border data transfers, including reform of the mutual legal assistance system.

At the same time, we put considerable resources into strengthening our internal engagement and accountability mechanisms. We completed our second-ever cycle of independent company assessments in July. This was followed by the four GNI constituencies participating in a wide-ranging review of that assessment process, developing recommendations for the improvement of future assessment cycles.

We also completed a review and update of the framework of core commitments made by our member companies – the first such review since the GNI Principles and Implementation Guidelines were launched in 2008.

In parallel to this, GNI members conducted a year-long program of joint learning with the seven Telecommunications Industry Dialogue companies – Millicom, Nokia, Orange, Telefónica, Telenor Group, Telia Company and Vodafone Group. These seven companies officially joined GNI as observers in February 2016.



7 December 2016

JUDITH LICHTENBERG
SPEAKS AT A WORKSHOP
ON NETWORK DISRUPTIONS
CO-HOSTED WITH IMS
AND ACCESSNOW, AT
THE 2016 IGF FORUM IN
GUADALAJARA, MEXICO



GNI'S GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESPONSIBLE COMPANY DECISION MAKING

Anchored in international human rights laws and standards, and informed by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the GNI Principles on Privacy and Freedom of Expression (“the GNI Principles”) and the GNI Implementation Guidelines provide a framework for companies to respect freedom of expression and privacy rights when responding to government requests related to content restriction and user data. The mission of GNI is for the GNI Principles to take root as a global standard for the protection of user rights across the information and communications technology (ICT) sector.

REVIEWING AND STRENGTHENING THE CORE COMMITMENTS OF GNI MEMBER COMPANIES

The GNI Governance Charter requires that the Principles and Implementation Guidelines be periodically assessed. In 2016, GNI completed the review of the GNI Principles and Implementation Guidelines, updating them to reflect changes in the legal and policy landscape influencing freedom of expression and privacy since they were published in 2008. The review also incorporates lessons learned from GNI’s first cycle of company assessments, and additional recommendations from the [2014 GNI Strategic Review](#).

The GNI Principles set out the overarching expectations for our member companies, and the Implementation Guidelines contain more detailed and specific guidance as to how companies are expected to implement the Principles in practice. Following a GNI Board decision in November 2014, a working group was established to propose revisions to the GNI Principles and Guidelines for wider consultation with GNI participants, the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue and other external stakeholders.

In 2016, following the review of the GNI Principles in 2015, the working group developed revisions to the GNI Implementation Guidelines to specifically reference two international instruments published after GNI launched in 2008. These are the [United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights \(UNGPs\)](#), published in 2011, and the [OECD Guidelines for Multi-National Enterprises](#), which were updated in 2011 to include human rights. The revised GNI Implementation Guidelines were presented to the Board at its December 2016 meeting, and after consideration and review, were approved by the GNI Board in February 2017.

For more information on the updates to these documents and to the GNI Governance Charter, please visit the [GNI website](#).

EXPANDING THE REACH OF THE GNI PRINCIPLES TO THE TELCO SECTOR

In February 2016, GNI took another step towards setting a global standard for human rights across the breadth of the ICT sector. Seven companies from the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue – Millicom, Nokia, Orange, Telefónica, Telenor Group,

Telia Company, and Vodafone Group [joined GNI as observers](#). Observer status lasts for one year, and the companies used this opportunity to attend GNI Board meetings and stakeholder events, and to participate in joint learning sessions on transparency reporting and human rights due diligence. Telecommunications Industry Dialogue companies also worked with GNI members on policy development – most notably on responses to the global spike in network shutdowns – and they took part in the stakeholder consultations for the periodic review of GNI’s Implementation Guidelines.

In November 2016, the seven companies submitted their applications for official membership, which were approved by the GNI Board in February 2017. These seven companies bring an additional 1.5 billion people using telecommunications services in over 120 countries under the coverage of the GNI Principles. The GNI membership expansion was officially announced at a reception held in Brussels on March 28, 2017, attended by EU and US policy makers, civil society groups, companies and the media.

DAVID SULLIVAN SPEAKS AT
A WORKSHOP ON NETWORK
DISRUPTIONS CO-HOSTED
WITH IMS AND ACCESSNOW,
AT THE 2016 IGF FORUM IN
GUADALAJARA, MEXICO)



KEY ENDORSEMENTS AND CITATIONS OF THE GNI PRINCIPLES AND MODEL

Throughout 2016, GNI’s human rights-based principles and our collaborative model were cited by a number of individuals and organizations working to enhance user rights in the ICT sector.

THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION

The United National Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Opinion and Expression, David Kaye, cited GNI in his 2016 “Mapping” Report. This [report](#) describes the human rights and regulatory ecosystem in the global ICT sector, and the key state and private actors relevant to freedom of expression.

As well as citing the GNI Principles as a key source for human rights principles applicable to the ICT sector, the Mapping report encourages companies to undertake human rights due diligence and impact assessments, recommendations that align with the GNI Principles and Implementation guidelines in these areas. GNI was one of thirty states and civil society organizations that contributed a [submission](#) to this report.

ICT4PEACE FOUNDATION / UN COUNTER-TERRORISM EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE

In its joint report, [Private Sector Engagement in Responding to the Use of the Internet and ICT for Terrorist Purposes](#), the ICT4Peace Foundation and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate cited GNI as a key forum for private technology and social media companies to engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue on content management issues relevant to terrorist or extremist content online. The report makes particular reference to the [international multi-stakeholder policy dialogue](#) launched by GNI in mid-2015, which resulted in a GNI Policy Brief, [Extremist Content and the ICT Sector](#), and its recommendations for governments and companies on how to address extremist

content online while respecting human rights. The ICT4Peace/UNCTED report states that GNI has “played an important role in ensuring that a focus on core principles, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, are sustained in industry content management efforts.”

UK’S INDEPENDENT REVIEWER OF TERRORIST LEGISLATION

In [January](#), David Anderson QC, the former UK Independent Reviewer of Terrorist Legislation referenced in social media GNI’s written evidence submitted to the Investigatory Powers Bill Committee, and our call for a coherent international framework for cross-border data requests that protects human rights.

THE FREEDOM ONLINE COALITION

The GNI Principles were referenced in “[The Case for Transparency](#),” part of a blog series by the Freedom Online Coalition’s Working Group Three on Privacy and Transparency Online. The blog noted that transparency facilitates oversight, highlighting the commitments member companies make under the GNI Principles as a tool for civil society, investors and other stakeholders to hold the ICT sector accountable.

GNI MEMBER COMPANIES ALL COMMIT TO PARTICIPATING IN THE GNI INDEPENDENT COMPANY ASSESSMENT PROCESS, WHICH EVALUATES THEIR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GNI PRINCIPLES. THIS ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM IS THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND IN THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY SECTOR, AND IS OVERSEEN BY THE GNI BOARD WITH ITS EQUAL REPRESENTATION FROM COMPANY AND NON-COMPANY CONSTITUENCIES. FINDINGS FROM THIS BIENNIAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS INFORM BOTH THE SHARED LEARNING AND POLICY ADVOCACY GNI CONDUCTS ON BEHALF OF ITS MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MEMBERSHIP, AS WELL AS FUTURE ASSESSMENTS.

THE 2015/16 GNI INDEPENDENT COMPANY ASSESSMENTS

In July, GNI completed its second cycle of independent company assessments. This cycle, which began in May 2015, included the second assessments of founding GNI member companies Google, Microsoft and Yahoo, and the first assessments of Facebook and LinkedIn.

The GNI assessment process is confidential by design. The assessors evaluate individual cases and internal company systems and processes. The GNI Board then reviews the confidential assessor reports, including details of cases such as the country and authority making the request.

For each cycle of assessments, GNI publishes a [public report on assessment](#) that is available on the GNI website which includes an overview of the assessor reports and sample case studies.

The 2015/16 Assessments provided a window into how companies responded to government requests to provide access to user data, or to take down or restrict access to user-generated content.

In this cycle, GNI examined 59 separate case studies from around the world. The cases showed that companies are using the GNI framework to review, modify, and challenge overbroad requests – including in local courts where appropriate – that may be in violation of local laws or inconsistent with international human rights standards.

The cases also illustrate the expanded deployment and integration of human rights impact assessments and staff training across company operations, including efforts to identify and mitigate risks to privacy and free expression in product design, mergers and acquisitions, and business relationships. A GNI-accredited company assessor offered this comment in their report on one GNI member company: “The commitment to protecting freedom of expression and privacy genuinely seems to have become a ‘lens’ through which business decisions are evaluated at various levels of the company.”



LISL BRUNNER ADDRESSES THE HELSINKI COMMISSION OF THE U.S. CONGRESS ON INTERNET FREEDOM, WITH TIM MAURER (CARNEGIE) AND THE COMMISSION'S SHELLY HAN.

Each company's assessment report also included recommendations to the company aimed at continued improvement of their policies and processes related to freedom of expression and privacy.

Assessment allows the civil society, academic, investor and company members on the GNI Board to take a deep dive into the systems, procedures and policies in place to protect user free expression and privacy for each member company. Based on a detailed evaluation of the confidential assessment reports prepared by independent accredited assessors, the GNI Board determined that the five companies are compliant with the GNI Principles. The announcement of the outcome of the 2015/16 Assessments can be viewed on [the GNI website](#).

ENHANCING THE TRANSPARENCY OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS]

As part of the second cycle of assessments, GNI added a number of enhancements aimed at making this confidential process more transparent to the public. In tandem with the release of the Public Report, GNI for the first time released the [Assessment Guidance](#) and [Reporting Framework](#) that are used by assessors to conduct the assessments. Additionally, the Public Report contained sample of cases of government requests, and a [Step-by-Step Guide](#) to how GNI Assessment works, which can be found on the GNI website.

As part of this assessment cycle, and based on recommendations from the 2014 assessment review, GNI created the opportunity for assessed companies to communicate directly with the public on the assessment process. [Facebook](#), [Microsoft](#) and [Yahoo](#) published self-reports on their individual company websites in December, and [LinkedIn](#) included a statement on their assessment as part of their half-yearly transparency report in September.

REVIEWING THE 2015/16 COMPANY ASSESSMENTS

The GNI Board appointed independent consultant and former GNI Board member Michael Samway to conduct a comprehensive review of issues raised by this second cycle of assessments. This review was similar to that conducted after the first cycle of assessments in 2014 as part of a broader [strategic review](#) of GNI. After consulting extensively across our membership, Mr. Samway presented recommendations at the GNI Board meeting in December designed to enhance the efficiency of the assessment process, and to ensure resources are targeted at producing the most meaningful evaluations. All but one of the recommendations were adopted by the GNI Board for the next cycle of assessments. The next assessment cycle will begin in Fall 2017.

KEY EVENTS:

JULY 7, 2016

Publication of the [GNI Public Report](#) on the 2015/16 Independent Company Assessments, and supporting documents, including the Step-by-Step Guide to the GNI Assessment Process.

DECEMBER 1, 2016

Independent consultant review of the 2015/16 GNI Company Assessments presented to the GNI Board.

GNI IS A UNIQUELY AUTHORITATIVE PLATFORM FOR COMPANIES, ACADEMICS, INVESTORS AND CIVIL SOCIETY TO SPEAK WITH A SINGLE VOICE, AND TO COLLECTIVELY ENGAGE GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO ADVOCATE FOR LAWS AND POLICIES THAT PROTECT AND RESPECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PRIVACY RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD.



KATH CUMMINS SPEAKS AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION ON THE ECONOMIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS HARMS OF NETWORK DISRUPTIONS, WITH DEJI OLUKOTUN (ACCESSNOW).

RESPONDING TO EXTREMIST CONTENT ONLINE WITHOUT HARMING FREE EXPRESSION AND PRIVACY

In July 2015, GNI launched an international [policy dialogue](#) to explore key human rights questions and considerations concerning government efforts to restrict online content with the aim of protecting the public from terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization.

GNI hosted and convened a series of expert roundtables and policy discussions – most held under Chatham House rule – bringing together its academic, civil society, investor, and company participants with other experts and representatives from governments, law enforcement agencies, and international organizations. Chatham House meetings were held in London (October 2015), Washington DC (February 2016) and Brussels (June 2016), and a closed consultation was held with civil society and company stakeholders in conjunction with AccessNow at RightsCon in San Francisco in March 2016.

The result of these discussions, and extensive deliberations within the membership of GNI, was the launch in November 2016 of the GNI Policy brief, [Extremist Content and the ICT Sector](#).⁷ The brief outlines a set of recommendations aimed at both governments and companies on how to protect and respect free expression and privacy when responding to alleged extremist or terrorist content online, including greater government transparency about requests made to companies and requests made on the basis of violations of company terms of service.

The recommendations were launched on November 30 at the United Nations in New York by GNI Executive Director Judith Lichtenberg and by acting Policy Director David Sullivan at GNI's Annual Public Learning Forum in Washington DC on the same day.

Throughout 2016, and in tandem with the development of these policy recommendations, GNI staff and member organizations participated in a series of public panel discussions and meetings of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (UNCTED) and the ICT4Peace Foundation. GNI serves as a member of the advisory group of the joint project of these two groups, [Private Sector Engagement in Responding to Terrorist Use of ICT](#), which launched in April 2016.

KEY EVENTS RESPONDING TO ONLINE EXTREMIST CONTENT WITHOUT HARMING USER RIGHTS.

17 FEBRUARY

GNI & American Society of International Law co-host a closed roundtable session on governments and company responses to Extremist Content and the ICT Sector in the US, with companies, US Government agencies, civil society and academics represented.

2 MARCH

Lisl Brunner presents to the Helsinki Commission in the US Congress on the work of GNI: "[Internet Freedom in the Age of Dictators and Terrorists.](#)"

15 MARCH

SXSW Austin. "Fighting ISIS Without Breaking the Internet," Lisl Brunner presents as part of this panel on multi-stakeholder approaches to addressing extremism while protecting rights online.

23 MARCH

Lisl Brunner presents at George Washington University public event: "*What are the Responsibilities of Tech Companies in an Age of International Terrorism?*"

30 MARCH

Judith Lichtenberg speaks at RightsCon panel: "*Combating Terrorism Online.*"

1 APRIL

Access Now-GNI Closed Roundtable Discussion on Extremist Content Online at RightsCon, San Francisco, with civil society and companies.

7 APRIL

Judith Lichtenberg speaks at the Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism, and at the launch of the ICT4Peace Foundation-UNCTED Project: Private Sector Engagement in Responding to Terrorist Use of ICT.

25 MAY

Judith Lichtenberg attends OHCHR Consultation on Draft Study: Respecting the Right to Privacy and Free Expression While Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Online. GNI also contributed a submission to this study.

25-26 AUG-
2-3 NOV

Mark Stephens attends ICT4Peace Foundation policy workshops and consultations in Zurich and Kuala Lumpur.

30 NOVEMBER

Judith Lichtenberg attends technical sessions organized by the UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate at the United Nations, New York; Simultaneous [launch](#) of GNI policy brief "Extremist Content and the ICT Sector" at the UN in New York and at the GNI Annual Public Learning Forum at Georgetown University, Washington DC.

BUILDING A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH TO NETWORK AND SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

2016 saw a spike in government-mandated disruptions of communications networks and internet services (such as social media, search engines, or news sites) around the world. GNI added its voice to the international campaign drawing attention to the human rights and economic costs of these disruptions, which threaten free expression,

restrict access to vital emergency, payment and health services, impede economic activity and sever contact between families and communities. Disruptions are often used during times of political unrest or in the lead-up to elections, and many occur in developing economies and emerging democracies.

Throughout 2016, GNI hosted and participated in a series of policy and learning sessions to draw attention to this issue.

In July, GNI and the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue issued the first-ever [joint statement](#) in which internet and telecommunications companies and civil society articulated their collective concerns about disruptions. The statement urges governments to be transparent with their citizens about their role in shutting down or restricting networks and services, and the legal justifications for any restrictions. The statement forms the basis of future work with Telecommunications Industry Dialogue companies, including a longer-term joint learning program on the development of multi-stakeholder strategies at both local and international levels to prevent and mitigate these shutdowns. (see [page 19 Learning for more details](#)).

In October, Kath Cummins participated in a [panel at The Brookings Institution](#) in Washington, DC, to highlight the interlinked economic and human rights harms caused by cutting access to the internet and other communications platforms. She called on governments to recognize the challenges these restrictions pose for long-term economic and social development rather than viewing shutdowns solely through a short-term security lens.

In October, GNI also launched a new report, [The Economic Impact of Disruptions to Internet Connectivity](#), which highlights the significant economic damage caused when governments around the world deliberately disrupt internet services. The report, which was prepared by Deloitte and made possible by funding from GNI member Facebook, lays out a framework for measuring the costs of shutdowns in terms of the daily gross domestic product lost in countries with varying levels of internet connectivity.

At the Freedom Online Coalition Conference in Costa Rica, Milka Pietikainen, from GNI observer company Millicom, spoke at a panel on strategies to prevent network disruptions and emphasized the importance of creating dialogue with governments ahead of crisis situations that may trigger disruption orders.

At the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in December in Guadalajara, Mexico, GNI co-hosted a well-attended [panel and series of workshops](#) alongside Access Now and GNI civil society member International Media Support. The focus of these workshops was practical collective policy responses to network disruptions, with key participants including the US State Department and Ghana's National Communications Authority.

The Freedom Online Coalition drew on both the GNI workshops at IGF and the Deloitte report GNI released in October to help formulate its [statement](#) on the harms of network shutdowns, which was released in March 2017.

During 2016, GNI released ten public statements drawing attention to the human rights and economic impacts of network shutdowns and disruptions around the world, including in Brazil, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Turkey and Uganda.

KEY EVENTS: BUILDING A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH TO NETWORK DISRUPTIONS.

12 JULY

Launch of the GNI-Telecommunications Industry Dialogue [joint statement](#) on the human rights and economic harms of network and service disruptions.

14 SEPTEMBER

GNI-Telecommunications Industry Dialogue joint public stakeholder session at AT&T in New York, bringing together companies, civil society, international institutions, investors and philanthropic foundations: “Human Rights in the Era of Network Shutdowns.”

6 OCTOBER

GNI’s Kath Cummins speaks at [Brookings Institution Event](#) in Washington, DC: “The Economic Impact of Network Shutdowns”

17-18 OCTOBER

Judith Lichtenberg speaks at Freedom Online Coalition Conference in Costa Rica on privacy and transparency in the ICT sector; Millicom’s Milka Pietikainen speaks on multi-stakeholder strategies to mitigate network disruptions.

27 OCTOBER

GNI releases the Deloitte Report: “[The Economic Impact of Disruptions to Internet Connectivity](#),” and its framework for measuring the impact of network disruptions on country GDP.

7 DECEMBER

Judith Lichtenberg and David Sullivan speak at a [GNI Workshop at the Internet Governance Forum](#) in Guadalajara, Mexico: “Inclusive Responses to Intentional Internet Disruptions.” Judith Lichtenberg also speaks at a panel on privacy, free expression and government direct access to telecommunications networks.

POLICY ADVOCACY ON THE UNITED KINGDOM INVESTIGATORY POWERS BILL AND REFORM OF CROSS-BORDER DATA AND MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE

In January 2016, GNI submitted [written evidence](#) to the Joint Committee of the UK Parliament reviewing the Investigatory Powers Bill. In the submission, GNI urged the UK to embrace the opportunity to establish a world-leading, sustainable legal framework for data moving across borders, and expressed concern about assertions of extraterritoriality that create uncertainty for all stakeholders. GNI also called for the government to ensure surveillance is subject to judicial authorization, targeted and proportionate; to avoid undermining security and encryption; and to embed user rights, transparency and accountability in surveillance powers.

In February, Mark Stephens and Judith Lichtenberg met with the UK Home Office to discuss GNI’s concerns about the bill. In April, Mark Stephens articulated GNI’s concerns at RightsCon San Francisco, on a panel titled “Snoopers’ Second Chance.” Later that month, GNI co-hosted a [public panel discussion](#) at the UK Houses of Parliament on the Investigatory Powers Bill and cross-border data requests. Speakers included representatives from Privacy International, the Center for Democracy and Technology, the Oxford Internet Institute, Yahoo and the UK Labour Party. In May, GNI provided input to the UK House of Commons Public Bill Committee, and followed this up in October with a letter to the new

UK Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, outlining key outstanding issues of concern.

UK INVESTIGATORY POWERS BILL AND CROSS-BORDER DATA REFORM

8 JANUARY

GNI submits [written evidence](#) to the UK Joint Committee scrutinizing the Investigatory Powers Bill (IPB). In May, GNI provides an additional submission on the bill to the UK House of Commons Public Bill Committee.

25 FEBRUARY

Mark Stephens and Judith Lichtenberg meet with the UK Home Office on key provisions of the IPB affecting privacy and freedom of expression.

19 APRIL

GNI co-hosts [public event](#) at UK House of Parliament: “Cross-Border Data Requests and the IPB” with Privacy International, the Center for Democracy and Technology and the Oxford Internet Institute.

2 JUNE

“A Conversation with the Global Network Initiative”: External Stakeholder event with EU government officials, GNI members, the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue and EU civil society in Brussels covering network shutdowns and extremist content.

14-16 NOVEMBER

Judith Lichtenberg attends Global Internet and Jurisdiction Conference, Paris.



THE GNI-INTERNEWS FELLOW FOR 2016/17: ‘GBENGA SESAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PARADIGM INITIATIVE, NIGERIA.

UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CONSULTATIONS & MEETINGS

Throughout 2016, GNI participated in a series of consultations with the UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, David Kaye and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy, Joe Cannataci, on their respective projects mapping of the actors, laws and policies relevant to freedom of expression and privacy in the ICT sector. GNI provided input to David Kaye’s multi-stage project exploring issues at the intersection of state action, the private sector and freedom of expression, beginning with his 2016 [“Mapping Report”](#) on freedom of expression and the global ICT sector, and continuing with his report, on [freedom of expression and the digital access industry](#), published in 2017. GNI engaged with SR Joe Cannataci as part of his focus on security and surveillance, and as part of his efforts to develop a draft legal instrument on surveillance.

KEY EVENTS: UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CONSULTATIONS & MEETINGS

29 FEBRUARY

GNI provides input to SR David Kaye’s study on private ICT sector responsibilities at a consultation session in Geneva, along with GNI member companies.

3 MARCH

Judith Lichtenberg joined a roundtable session in The Hague organized by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs with SR Joe Cannataci, along with civil society representatives and other stakeholders.

31 MARCH

GNI staff and members attended a meeting with SR David Kaye at RightsCon, San Francisco, where the SR reported on his progress with his “Mapping” projects and received feedback.

12-13 JUNE

Closed roundtable session with SR Joe Cannataci, along with GNI member companies, Malta.

19-20 JULY

Judith Lichtenberg attends a workshop and discussion held in New York by SR Joe Cannataci: “Privacy, Personality and Flows of Information.”

13 SEPTEMBER

Mark Stephens and Judith Lichtenberg attend “Mapping” project consultation with SR Joe Cannataci in New York, along with GNI member companies.

24 OCTOBER

David Sullivan attends consultation session with David Kaye at the University of Connecticut along with companies and civil society representatives on the responsibility of digital access providers to conduct human rights due diligence.

11 NOVEMBER

GNI provides [input](#) to David Kaye’s study on telecommunications companies and the internet access sector.



THE FRUIT OF 18 MONTHS OF GLOBAL CONSULTATIONS, THIS GNI POLICY BRIEF GUIDES GOVERNMENTS AND COMPANIES ON HOW TO BEST RESPECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION WHEN RESPONDING TO EXTREMIST CONTENT ONLINE.



GNI PROVIDES MEMBERS WITH A SPACE FOR CONFIDENTIAL SHARED LEARNING ON A RANGE OF ISSUES INVOLVING GOVERNMENT REQUESTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PRIVACY OF ICT USERS AND CUSTOMERS. REGULAR STRUCTURED LEARNING AND BRIEFING SESSIONS LEVERAGE THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE OF MEMBERS, AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD ON BEST PRACTICES AND POLICIES. GNI MEMBER COMPANIES BENEFIT FROM THE REAL-TIME INPUT OF ACADEMICS, INVESTORS AND CIVIL SOCIETY EXPERTS, AND MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO HEAR DIRECTLY FROM COMPANIES ON THE CONSTANTLY EVOLVING CHALLENGES THEY FACE WITH GOVERNMENT REQUESTS RECEIVED IN JURISDICTIONS AROUND THE WORLD. INSIGHTS FROM THE GNI LEARNING PROGRAM INFORM GNI'S EXTERNAL POLICY ADVOCACY AND OUR INDEPENDENT COMPANY ASSESSMENT PROCESS.

The learning program in 2016 prioritized opportunities for GNI and the companies of the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue to work together. Priority issues were network shutdowns and communications service disruptions, and identification of best practices for human rights due diligence.

To reflect the importance of GNI's policy and learning work streams, the new committee structure rolled out in 2016 created separate committees responsible for the oversight of policy advocacy and learning. For more information on GNI's new committee structure, please see the Governance section on page 21. The new Learning Committee plan for 2016 and 2017 includes the development of a proactive learning agenda with calls, webinars and briefings on current and emerging issues, internal forums to explore issues arising from the assessment process, learning events, including the GNI Annual Public Learning Forum, and supporting materials to demonstrate the value of GNI to new members, funders and stakeholders.

GNI LEARNING EVENTS IN 2016

- 14 JANUARY** Member briefing on YouTube localization in Pakistan, with speakers from Bolo Bhi and Google.
- 19-20 JANUARY** Mark Stephens and Judith Lichtenberg attend shared learning sessions with the Telecommunications Industry Dialogue and external stakeholders on country legal frameworks relevant to telecommunications operator and vendor companies, and company transparency issues for content restriction.
- 1 FEBRUARY** Member Learning Call on Cyber-violence, with speakers from GNI members Bolo Bhi, Facebook, George Washington University Law School, Google, Yahoo and the Center for Free Expression and Access to Information (CELE) Argentina.
- 11 MARCH** GNI-Telecommunications Industry Dialogue Joint Learning Session in Washington DC on best practices for company due diligence, with presentations from Internews, Yahoo and Telia Company.

APRIL 26-7

Judith Lichtenberg attended Telecommunications Industry Dialogue Board meeting and stakeholder learning sessions in Oslo. One session focused on transparency in the telecommunications sector, with presentations from Telenor, Nokia, Telia Company and AT&T. The other covered experiences with communications service disruptions, measuring their impacts, minimization of impacts and bases for future collective engagement and action.

2 JUNE

GNI-Telecommunications Industry Dialogue joint learning session in Brussels on the prevention and mitigation of network shutdowns, and approaches to extremist content online.

JUNE 20

Judith Lichtenberg participated remotely in International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR) convening: “Remedy in the Context of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives”, held in Washington DC.

SEPTEMBER 14

A joint GNI-Telecommunications Industry Dialogue closed learning session hosted by GNI member, the Committee to Protect Journalists, “Patterns of Global Network Shutdowns and Disruptions”, with a presentation of research by GNI-Google Fellow, Jan Rydzak.



SEAMUS HUGHES FROM THE PROGRAM ON EXTREMISM AT GWU SPEAKS AT THE GNI ANNUAL PUBLIC LEARNING FORUM AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, ALONGSIDE ‘GBENGA SESAN (PARADIGM), BERNARD SHEN (MICROSOFT) AND EMMA LLANSÓ (CDT).

GNI 2016 ANNUAL PUBLIC LEARNING FORUM

GNI’s 2016 Annual Public Learning Forum took place on November 30 in Washington DC, bringing together experts to explore the challenges on the horizon for privacy and free expression in the ICT sector. The event was hosted by the Georgetown University Master of Science in Foreign Service Program.

The first session of the forum looked at extraterritoriality and global threats to free expression and privacy, illustrating the challenges facing companies arising from conflicts of law as governments attempt to assert control over content and user data beyond their borders. The panel brought together Andrea Glorioso from the European Union External Action Service, Fariha Aziz from Bolo Bhi, Pakistan, Jennifer Daskal from the American University College of Law, Arturo Carrillo and Dawn Nunziato from the George Washington School of Law, and Andy O’Connell from Facebook.

The second session of the day convened representatives from government and international institutions along with companies, academics, and civil society organizations to discuss transparency and due process around human rights while grappling with violent extremism online. Speakers included Seamus Hughes from George Washington University, ‘Gbenga Sesan from Paradigm Initiative Nigeria, Emma Llansó from the Center for Democracy and Technology, and Bernard Shen from Microsoft.

GOVERNANCE

THE GNI BOARD IN 2016

The GNI Board of Directors is responsible for the strategic direction and fiduciary operations of GNI, and is led by an Independent Board Chair. In 2016, the board was made up of the chair and representatives of GNI's four constituencies: five company representatives, four civil society organization representatives, two academic representatives and two designate an alternate member from within its organization or constituency.

● INDEPENDENT CHAIR

MARK STEPHENS, CBE.

● COMPANIES

PABLO CHAVEZ

LinkedIn

STEVE CROWN

Microsoft

TEKEDRA MAWAKANA

(through January 2016)

NICOLE KARLEBACH

^ (from February 2016)

Yahoo

MATT PERAULT

Facebook

● CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

ARVIND GANESAN

Human Rights Watch

JODIE GINSBERG

Index on Censorship *

ROB MAHONEY

Committee to Protect Journalists

GREG NOJEIM

Center for Democracy & Technology

● INVESTORS

BENNETT FREEMAN

(GNI Board Secretary)

Calvert Group

SARA NORDBRAND

Church of Sweden

● ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS

DALIA TOPELSON RITVO ¹

VIVEK KRISHNAMURTHY ¹

Berkman-Klein Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University.

ARTURO CARRILLO ²

George Washington University Law School, Washington DC.

EDUARDO BERTONI ²

Center for Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (CELE) University of Palermo, Argentina

● BOARD ALTERNATES IN 2016

FARIEHA AZIZ

Bolo Bhi

LAUREN COMPERE ³

Boston Common Asset Management

SARA HARRINGTON

LinkedIn

ADAM KANZER

Domini Impact Investments LLC

DEIRDRE MULLIGAN ⁴

U.C. Berkeley School of Information

ANDY O'CONNELL

Facebook

KATHLEEN REEN ⁵

Internews (through August 2016)

JEANNE BOURGAULT ⁵

Internews (from September 2016)

KATIE SHAY [^]

Yahoo

BERNARD SHEN

Microsoft

ALEXANDRIA WALDEN

Google

CYNTHIA WONG

Human Rights Watch

[^] Ms. Karlebach moved from being an alternate member to the Yahoo Board member in January 2016, after the departure of Ms. Mawakana. The alternate member position for Yahoo was filled by Katie Shay.

¹ Ms. Ritvo served through June 2016 and Mr. Krishnamurthy replaced her from July 2016.

² Mr. Carrillo moved from being an alternate member to a Board member from March 2016, after Mr. Bertoni stepped down from the Board.

³ Ms. Compere stepped down as an alternate member in November 2016.

⁴ Ms. Mulligan stepped down as an alternate member in September 2016.

⁵ Ms. Reen was replaced as an alternate member in September 2016 by Jeanne Bourgault

GNI COMMITTEES

GNI operates through committees and working groups that report to the Board and the membership. In early 2016, and after consultation with the membership, GNI rolled out a new committee structure. The restructure is designed to encourage the broader involvement of our membership and to draw on their varied expertise.

The committees are: Executive & Management Committee, Accountability, Policy, Learning, Membership and Development. All except Executive & Management (which draws from members of the Board only) are open to every GNI member. All have two co-chairs, one from a company member and one from a non-company constituency, except Executive & Management, which is chaired by the Independent Board Chair together with the GNI Board Secretary. Special Representatives from the constituencies not represented by the co-chairs are also appointed.

The Executive & Management Committee is responsible for fiduciary operations and internal policies, including budget, staffing and the conflict of interest policy. The Accountability Committee is responsible for the GNI assessment process and maintaining GNI's core accountability documents – including the GNI Principles and Implementation Guidelines; the Policy Committee oversees the development of GNI policy and advocacy priorities; the Learning Committee oversees the content of GNI's internal program of shared learning sessions and both public and private learning events; the Membership Committee and the Development Committee are responsible for, respectively, the diversifying of GNI's funding base, and for outreach and recruitment of new company, academic, NGO and investor members.

In addition to our committees, GNI forms ad hoc working groups on particular subjects. In 2016, the Implementation Guidelines Working Group oversaw the review of the GNI Principles and Implementation Guidelines; the Extremist Content Working Group developed the recommendations aimed at governments and companies contained in the Extremist Content Policy Brief; and in September, a China Working Group was created to focus on the special challenges for member companies operating in this and other authoritarian jurisdictions.

STAFF

The GNI secretariat is based in Washington DC and Amsterdam. It supports the GNI committees and working groups, develops and hosts closed-session and public events, prepares for GNI participation in conferences and meetings, drafts submissions, reports and media releases, and facilitates the collaboration of GNI's diverse participants.

Executive Director Judith Lichtenberg, based in Amsterdam, oversees GNI's accountability and advocacy goals, the expansion of membership and funding, and building consensus for the advancement of freedom of expression and privacy across the four constituencies. Director of Communications and Outreach Kath Cummins, based in Washington DC, is responsible for GNI's internal engagement, developing transparency and public communications for the company assessments, and outreach to policy makers, funders, stakeholders and the media. Until May 2016, Lisl Brunner served as the GNI Policy and Learning Director, overseeing policy development and GNI Learning activities.

In May 2016, David Sullivan, former Policy and Communication Director, returned to GNI as Director of Learning and Development. David oversees the internal GNI Learning program, including shared GNI-Industry Dialogue learning and public learning events and conferences. David also continued to oversee GNI's policy program during the search for a new Policy Director. Chris Sheehy, Research and Administrative Associate, coordinates day-to-day operations for GNI staff and membership, providing support for research, communications, events and social media.

GNI is grateful for the support of two policy fellows in 2016: Google Policy Fellow and University of Arizona PhD candidate, Jan Rydzak, and Georgetown University Master of Science in Foreign Service Fellow, Barbara Dourley.



JUDITH LICHTENBERG
Executive Director



KATH CUMMINS
*Director of Communications
& Outreach*



LISL BRUNNER
*Director of Policy and Learning
(until May 2016)*



DAVID SULLIVAN
*Director of Learning
and Development
(from September 2016)*



CHRIS SHEEHY
*Administrative &
Research Support*

● **FELLOWS**

JAN RYDZAK
2016 Google Policy Fellow

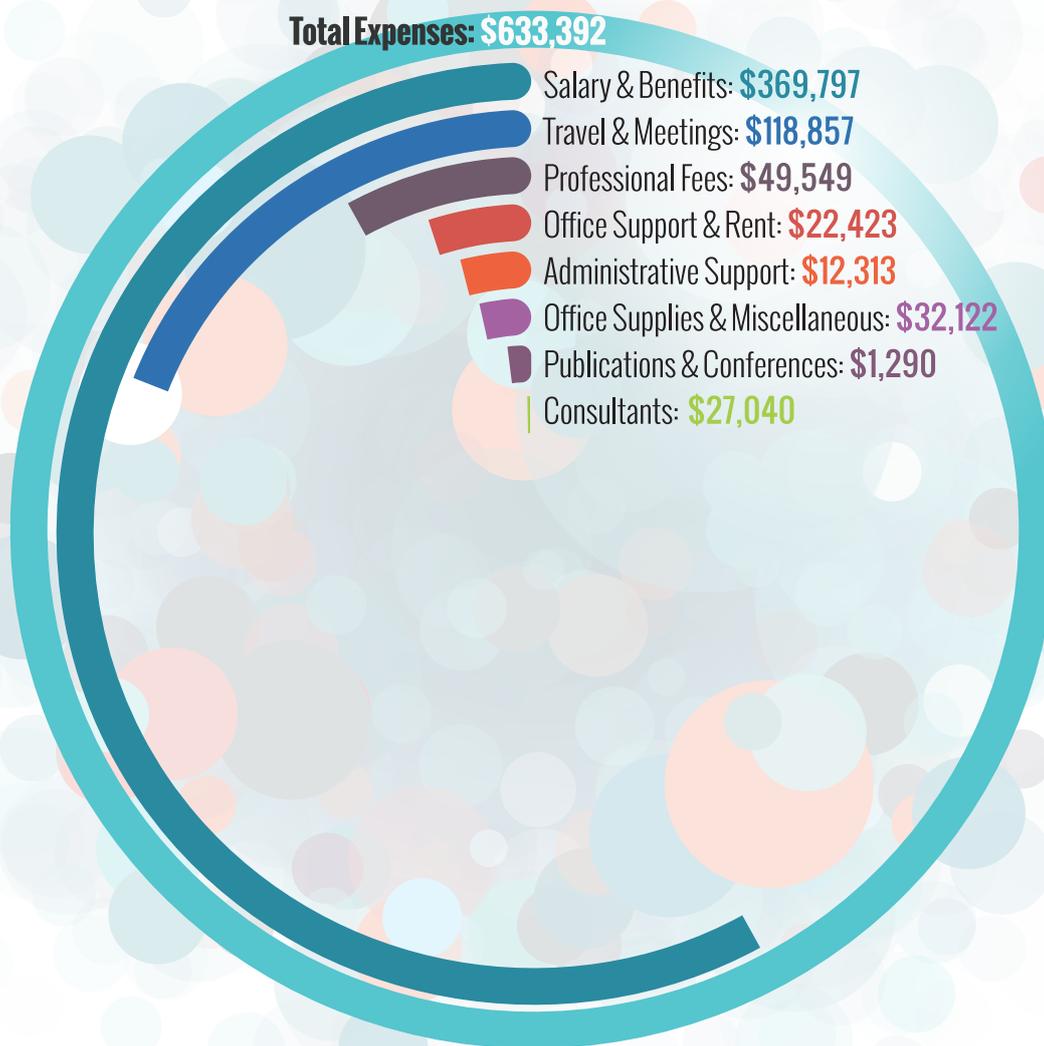
BARBARA DOURLEY
2016-17 GNI - Georgetown MSFS Fellow

2016 FINANCIALS

Public Support & Revenue

Interest Income: \$64 Contributions & Grants: \$0 Total Public Support & Revenue: \$845,254
Membership Income: \$845,190

Excess of Income Over Expenses: \$211,861
Net Assets, Beginning: \$456,706 Net Assets, Ending: \$668,568





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACCOUNTING, ADMINISTRATION AND IT

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of staff from Friedman & Associates, PC the Center for Democracy & Technology, and also the legal and events staff at Howard Kennedy LLP, especially Eleanor Barker.

DESIGN

j. Gregory Barton of DC-based design and technology firm BRITT BARTON produced this report.

LEGAL

GNI appreciates the legal advice and support it receives from White & Case LLP, especially Charles Moore, Noah Brumfield, Thomas Flynn, Christopher Hines, Danielle Hodgson, Earle Miller, and Bijal V. Vakil.

MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

The Board Chair, Executive Director and staff of GNI would like to thank the many GNI members, and supporters and collaborators around the world who help make our work possible.

We also extend our appreciation to Michael Samway (BHR Group and Georgetown University) for leading the review of GNI's second cycle of company assessments.

OUR MEMBERS



Committee to Protect Journalists





GLOBAL
NETWORK
INITIATIVE