Decolonizing Shutdown Circumvention: Strategy and Skill for Circumvention Training in Shutdown Areas

Who are we?

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Agenda

- What it means to "decolonise"?
- What are the current problems in the field of Internet Shutdown Circumvention?
  - Experience from Bangladesh
- What do we need right now?
  - Tools to help us (possibly) do better.
  - Need assessment
  - Impact cost matrix
- Let's role play!
- Discussion

Case Study: Bangladesh

Current Problems with Circumvention Trainings

- "Circumvention Guide" - (Trying to) Have One-size-fit-all solution
- Ignoring political context & threat models
  - Will using VPN put them in jail?
- Ignorance of cultural & economic context
  - Things we are used to in developed countries might not be the norm.
  - Assuming Universal Access to Smartphones
  - Different capacity due to longer working hours and economic situation, etc.
- Avoid Top-Down teaching approach
- There isn't that much work done to begin with!

Be humble and listen!
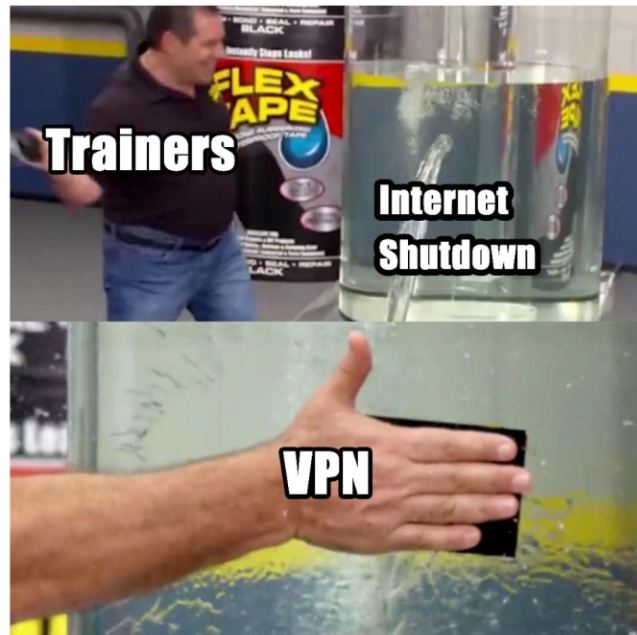
Learn to Analysing Their Risk and Threats

Tailor your Training to Specific their Needs

- **Different groups and individuals face unique risks (Even within the same country!)**
  - Consider factors such as:
  - Profession (e.g., journalists, activists, lawyers)
  - Ethnic and Religious Minorities (who may face targeted threats)
  - Region - Internet penetration & infrastructure vary between capital cities and rural areas.
- **Risks may include:**
  - Surveillance (targeted and general)
  - Device Seizure and Confiscation

$$RISK = \frac{Threats \times Vulnerabilities}{Capacities}$$

Learn to Analysing Their Risk and Threats

- There are a lot of organizations premade modules that help (security focused)
  - Frontline Defenders - <u>Module 11: Analysing Risk - The Risk Formula for a Personal Protection Plan</u>
  - Electronic Frontier Foundation - <u>Security Education Companion</u>
- Although there is not much developed material for shutdown circumvention

Learn to Analysing Their Risk and Threats

Tools / things that could help

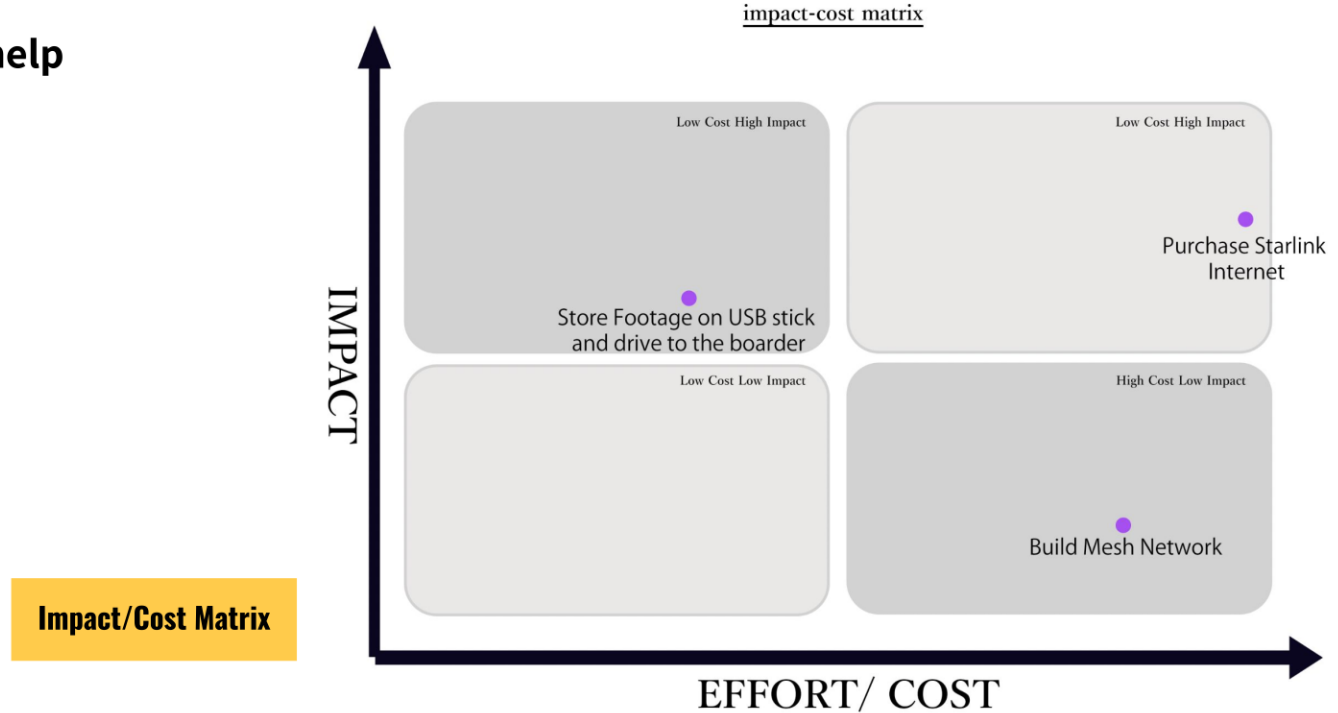- **Needs Mapping & Mitigation Planning**

Needs Mapping & Mitigation Planning

	Goal	What procedures/ data are involved?	Who is involved?	What risks or constraints will they encounter?	How likely the risk is going to happen?	Current circumvention method	Potential circumvention	Any possible risk?	ACTION PLAN
1	Delivery News	Reporter on the ground capturing footage	Reporter	No internet Police search	High	Hiding USB	Encryption tool Tella app	Police Search Tella app	- Security training for staff - Install, and Train staff on using Tella
		Reporter sending footage to newsroom	Reporter Editor	No internet	High	none	USB dead drop Mesh network	Police find out Technical difficulties	- Install Veracrypt on company USB drives - Security training for staff
		Citizens submitting materials	Citizens Editor	No internet Data Poisoning	High Low	none			- Install DangerZone - Promote secure communication channel

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Tools / things that could help
- **Impact - Cost Matrix**

Impact/Cost Matrix

impact-cost matrix

IMPACT

Low Cost High Impact

Low Cost High Impact

Purchase Starlink
Internet

Store Footage on USB stick
and drive to the boarder

Low Cost Low Impact

High Cost Low Impact

Build Mesh Network

EFFORT/ COST

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Pre-, During, and Post- Shutdown Protocols

Pre-Shutdown Preparation

- Different group, different person can have very different risks
- Digital Security Training
- Distribute Secure Tools & relevant Offline Resources
- Tool Familiarization
- A lot of circumvention needs to be set up in advance! E.g. Mesh Network

During-Shutdown Protocols

- Create Mitigation Plan in advance
- Monitor the Situation and Adapt

Role Play

- On each table, there will be trainers and trainers.

1. **Freedom Times (Opposition media outlet)**
2. **Freedonia Minority Rights Group**
3. **Freedonia University Student Union (Protest organizers)**

You can talk to each other!

- <u>Come up with their circumvention plans during Internet Shutdown</u>

Background on Freedonia

- **Location & Geography:** Fictional coastal country in Northern Africa.

- **Government & Economy:**
  - Semi-authoritarian regime led by President Mbayo (over a decade in power).
  - Political instability due to ethnic conflicts, centralization of power, and economic struggles.
  - Farming-dependent economy with widespread poverty; urban development improving, but rural areas lack basic services.
  - **Recent elections saw fraud allegations, leading to protests and heightened government crackdowns, including restrictions on internet access and social media platforms.**

- **Internet Infrastructure:**
  - **Underdeveloped**; monopolized by state-owned **Freedom Telecom**, leading to high costs and low innovation.
  - **Low penetration (25–30%)**, mostly in urban areas, leaving rural communities disconnected.
  - Frequent **censorship & shutdowns** during political unrest and exams, hindering communication, national exams, and economy.

How can we move forward?

- Tool testing & Evaluate Protocol Effectiveness
- Consolidate resources
- Build network, both locally and internationally
- Develop a set of methodology for Shutdown Mitigation Planning

Q&A / Discussion

- **Share your experience?**
- **What difficulties you've encountered?**
- **Any resources you can share?**
- **Tips for everyone to conduct effective training sessions**
- **Questions? Concerns?**

Get in Touch!

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