Open Technology Fund Impact and Accomplishments

The Open Technology Fund (OTF) is a non-profit organization that aims to advance Internet freedom in the world’s most repressive environments so that all people can safely access the uncensored Internet in order to seek, receive, and impart information freely. OTF was first established in 2012 as a program at USAGM grantee Radio Free Asia and became an independent organization in 2019. OTF supports the funding of numerous types of projects including, but not limited to: proven, large-scale circumvention solutions as well as investing in the incubation and implementation of novel, cutting-edge circumvention tools; censorship and measurement detection tools; secure communication, file-sharing and storage technologies; and peer-to-peer communications capabilities.

NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Since OTF’s inception in 2012, OTF has funded over 400 innovative projects to combat censorship and repressive surveillance, 50 fellowships to support cutting-edge research and digital security interventions, 6 labs to improve the security, usability, resiliency and interoperability of key Internet freedom technologies, and over 100 rapid-response interventions to address digital emergencies.

- Over the past 7 years, OTF has reviewed and responded to over 3,500 requests for Internet freedom support; requests for assistance totaled nearly $450 million.

- Over 75% of OTF’s budget is used to support the development and implementation of circumvention and secure communication technologies.

- Today, over 2 billion people use OTF-supported technology, and more than two-thirds of all mobile users globally have technology incubated by OTF on their device.

- OTF-funded circumvention tools, like Lantern and Psiphon, are used by tens of millions of people living in Internet-restricted countries to access the uncensored Internet, including about 5 million daily users in China.

- OTF is currently investing in the development of next-generation, AI-powered circumvention solutions that can identify and exploit gaps in censorship firewalls in real-time.

- OTF incubated and assisted in developing the back-end security protocols used by WhatsApp.

- OTF’s Red Team Lab has identified and patched nearly 2,000 privacy and security vulnerabilities to ensure Internet freedom tools can be used safely in dangerous environments.

- OTF’s Localization Lab has translated Internet freedom tools into over 200 languages including Mandarin, Russian, Farsi, Spanish, Arabic, Tibetan, French, and Vietnamese.

- OTF-supported network measurement tools monitor and detect Internet censorship in real-time in over 210 countries.

- OTF has provided rapid response assistance to journalists in more than 40 countries, including Azerbaijan, Burma, China, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Russia, Syria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

- After the contested 2018 presidential election in Venezuela, OTF provided digital security training to journalists on the ground, deployed circumvention and secure communication tools for tens of thousands of citizens, and assisted a network of journalists that were targeted by government-sponsored hacking attempted.

- OTF is developing and deploying new technical solutions in Iran to combat future Internet shutdowns, including highly innovative peer-to-peer solutions.

- OTF is currently surging support to Hong Kong for circumvention and secure communication tools, expanding digital security support and research, and increasing support for rapid response.