

# The AFRICA Digital Rights Fund

## About the Fund

The Africa Digital Rights Fund offers flexible and rapid response grants to select initiatives in Africa to implement activities that advance digital rights, including advocacy, litigation, research, policy analysis, digital literacy and digital security skills building.

Grant amounts range between US\$ 1,000 and US\$ 10,000, depending on the need and scope of the proposed intervention. The grant period will not exceed six months. An average of 15 grants will be awarded per year.

## Why the Fund

Digital rights are increasingly under threat in Africa, yet few organisations are working to defend and promote these rights. Moreover, many organizations active in this area face limitations of reach, skills, resources, and consistency in engagement in digital rights work. With a quarter of the continent's people using the internet and with 76 mobile phone connection for every 100 individuals in Africa, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has become pivotal to improving livelihoods and promoting human rights. However, rising digital rights violations such as arrests and intimidation of internet users, network shutdowns, and a proliferation of laws and regulations that hamper internet access and affordability, undermine the potential of digital technologies to catalyse free expression and civic participation or to drive innovation.

It is crucial therefore to grow the number of organisations that are working to advance digital rights. This necessitates supporting established and emerging digital organisations, many of whom find it difficult to sustain their work as they face state repression, stagnant or declining funding, and capacity challenges. The Fund will benefit small organisations, including those that do not qualify for support from most funders for lack of registration and institutional capacity to develop applications and manage big projects. The Fund will also benefit organisations and initiatives that need rapid response support to respond swiftly to emerging issues that can not wait for many funders' lengthy application procedures.

The Fund will encourage partnerships between actors, to leverage their collective proficiencies and develop a wide network of active, regionally-based digital rights actors.

## General Guidelines



### Geographical Coverage

In the first year of the Fund, i.e. the calendar year 2019, only organisations based in East and Southern Africa shall be eligible. In subsequent years, the scope shall be expanded to cover other regions of the continent.



### Size of Grants

Grant size shall range from US\$1,000 to US\$10,000. Cost sharing is strongly encouraged.



### Eligible Activities

The activities that are eligible for funding are those that protect and advance digital rights. These may include but are not limited to research, advocacy, policy analysis, litigation, digital literacy and digital security skills building, and participating in digital rights policymaking processes.



### Duration

The grant funding shall be for a period not exceeding six months.

## **Eligibility Requirements**

- The Fund is open to organisations and coalitions working to advance digital rights in Africa.
- The initiatives to be funded will preferably have formal registration in an African country, but in some circumstances organisations and coalitions that do not have formal registration may be considered. Such organisations need to show evidence that they are operational in a particular African country or countries.
- The activities to be funded must be in/on an African country or countries.

## **Ineligible Activities**

- The Fund shall not fund any activity that does not directly advance digital rights.
- The Fund will not support travel to attend conferences or workshops, except in exceptional circumstances where such travel is directly linked to an activity that is eligible.
- Reimbursements for costs that have already been incurred
- The Fund shall not provide scholarships.
- Fund recipients are excluded from receiving more than one grant at a time.

## **Administration**

The Fund is administered by the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). An internal and external panel of experts, will make decisions on beneficiaries based on the following criteria:

- If the proposed intervention fits within the Fund's digital rights priorities.
- The relevance to the given context/country.
- Commitment and experience of the applicant in advancing digital rights.
- Potential impact of the intervention on digital rights.

## **Identifying Beneficiaries**

There shall be three methods of identifying potential grantees:

- i) CIPESA shall receive referrals from its partners for organisations to consider to benefit from the Fund, or directly identify organisations working on digital rights and reach out to them. Decisions under this category shall be made on a case by case basis.
- ii) Calls for applications published twice a year on the CIPESA website and social media platforms. Deadlines for submissions for each call shall be stated in the call notice. Decisions shall be made within three weeks of closure of receipt of applications for each cycle.
- iii) By an entity applying to CIPESA at any time in case of an emergency issue that requires rapid response. Decisions under this category shall be made on a case by case basis.

## **Guiding principles**

The African Digital Rights Fund will be guided by the following principles:

- Transparency: The Fund will be administered in a transparent and open manner. Information about the Fund and the procedures for accessing it shall be publically available online, promoted at relevant events and widely circulated in online forums related to internet policy.
- Diversity and non-discrimination: Care will be taken to ensure geographical representation and diversity of fund beneficiaries, with initiatives focused on women's rights, media rights, sexual minority' rights and People with Disabilities (PWDs) rights strongly represented among the beneficiaries.
- Speed of decision-making: The period from receipt of applications to making a decision on awarding the grant shall average one month for regular grants, and one week for emergency grants.
- Privacy and security: some initiatives or interventions supported under the Fund may have associated risks. CIPESA will ensure that the privacy and personal data of at-risk beneficiaries are treated with confidentiality.
- Building internal capacity of beneficiaries: Where needed, the Fund will offer support to raise capacity in such areas as financial reporting, conducting advocacy, process documentation, researching internet freedom issues, and securing personal or organisational communications.

**Apply for the Africa Digital Rights Fund [here](#)**