

STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR THE PERIOD 2023-2027



CIPESA

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Foreword from the **Board Chairperson**

The past years have been a significant milestone for CIPESA as it bolstered its position as a leading ICT policy and governance think tank in Africa. Reflecting on our 19-year journey since inception as a Centre promoting inclusive ICT policymaking in Africa, we are proud of our collective achievements that have repositioned the role of ICT as an enabler of good governance, human rights and livelihoods.

Our track record shows our remarkable progress and accomplishments in expanding our African network.

As well as advancing ICT research, documentation and policy analysis, data governance, internet freedom, digital civic participation, digital resilience, digital skilling and digital inclusion for all, mainly focusing on women, persons with disabilities and refugees.

Looking ahead, CIPESA's strategic direction for 2023-2027 aims to reinforce the Centre's solid foundation and growth to achieve our mission to promote inclusive and effective use of ICT in Africa for improved governance and livelihood. Our strategic plan is alive to how ICT environments' rapid and relentless evolution continues to present contemporary challenges to Africa's digital transformation agenda and her SDG Agenda 2030 development targets. These challenges include high cost and low access to the Internet, declining Internet freedoms and digital rights, the gender digital divide, and inadequate digital skills and leadership.

As such, CIPESA's strategic plan 2023-2027 takes a future-focused approach to tackle the above mentioned challenges through six core strategic objectives. Namely, promoting equitable access to digital technologies for underserved populations, promoting economic growth through digital technologies, enhancing digital resilience, promoting adequate data protection, advancing internet freedom and governance, and promoting online participation of African civic actors.

We are grateful to our partners and donors for supporting CIPESA's programmes. We reiterate our commitment to strengthening these partnerships and fostering new ones as we work towards achieving CIPESA's strategic objectives.



Marjorie Kyomuhendo, PhD
CIPESA Board Chairperson

Executive Summary

The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) has since 2004 been a leading centre for research and analysis aimed at enabling policy makers in the region to understand Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy issues, and for various stakeholders to effectively use ICT to improve governance and livelihoods. This Strategic Plan (2023-2027) builds on achievements the organisation has registered since its establishment, harnesses opportunities, and addresses the weaknesses and challenges identified while remaining a thought leader and network builder in the arena of inclusive ICT for development, governance and human rights in Africa.

Our plan has been informed by internal reflections on successes and challenges as well as consultations with multiple stakeholders led by a team of external consultants. We also observe an increased commitment by both state and non-state actors in the recognition of the important role of the internet in advancing development and driving economic growth. This recognition goes to the highest levels of the international development scene as ICT has been identified as a catalytic driver to enable the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nevertheless, we also note several challenges still impeding Africa's digital transformation agenda, such as high cost and low access to the internet, declining internet freedom and digital rights, a shortage of electricity, lack of digital skills and gender digital divide disparities.

Given achievements made and new challenges identified, and working with different identified stakeholders, the strategic areas for the 2023 – 2027 have identified as – promotion of online participation of civic actors in Africa; promotion of effective and efficient use and protection of data by both state and non-state actors; promotion of economic growth through digital technologies; promotion and advancement of internet freedom and governance in Africa; and enhancing the digital resilience and adaptability of CSOs in the face of cyber threats. Five strategic actions have been identified to enable us execute these areas. These include - researching and documenting key issues affecting the digital civic space; building and strengthening the capacity of different actors in advocating for adoption and implementation of progressive ICT policies and understanding risks to digital rights and how to mitigate them; providing strategic public interest litigation by promoting best practice for more effective collaboration across disciplinary silos in digital rights litigation; contributing to positive legal and policy reforms, raising awareness about key policy areas of interest and facilitating movement building and creating strategic alliances to enable us achieve our impact.

Ultimately, we will also need to strengthen our institutional systems by adopting and updating key organisational instruments such as the Human Resource Policy, Finance Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and strategies on fundraising, communications, advocacy, and organisational digital resilience.




founded

2004

Introduction

Digital technologies are increasingly becoming pivotal to the enjoyment of people’s rights and improvement of their livelihoods. The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated a greater need for the adoption of ICT and ultimately respect for digital freedoms. Though the continent registered an increase in internet access and usage in the last decade, several African governments continue to take measures that weaken the internet’s potential to drive innovation, catalyse free expression and civic participation. Digital rights violations such as arrests and intimidation of online users, as well as internet disruptions, are increasing. The last few years have also witnessed a proliferation of laws and regulations that undermine digital rights, adverse policies such as increased internet taxation, limited judicial oversight over spiralling state surveillance, and disinformation schemes that undermine democracy. This “digital authoritarianism” is part of the democratic regression being experienced in many African states. Indeed, in the Democracy Index for 2020, the number of authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa rose from 22 to 24 – more than half of the 44 countries in the region that the index covered. In 2021, the authoritarian states were 23. As digital technologies have become central for organising, access to information and free expression that is critical of governments, many states have moved to shrink the online digital space.



24 the number of authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa rose, more than half of the **44** countries in the region that the index covered.

On the other hand, many of the civic actors working on internet policy and digital rights issues have limited advocacy and digital security skills to secure their communications. Growing the numbers of such actors, their capacity, access to resources and to

networks, is crucial to advancing more progressive ICT policies and practices in Africa. Equally crucial is generating evidence on the matters affecting the digital civic space and conducting meaningful engagements with governments, private companies including online platforms, academia and the media.

CIPESA has since inception been a leading centre for research and information brokerage to enable policy makers in the region to understand ICT policy issues, and for various multi-stakeholders to effectively use ICT to improve governance and livelihoods. Today CIPESA is a leading ICT policy and governance think tank in Africa. CIPESA has strongly exhibited its passion about raising the capacity of African stakeholders in effective ICT policy making and in engendering ICT in development and poverty reduction, as per its mandate. We have enjoyed steady growth and scaled successfully to work in more countries and serve a more diverse portfolio of beneficiaries.

Our work is responsive to the constantly evolving ICT political and legislative environment of the countries we work in, but also recognises trends that threaten freedom of expression and access to information, and works to mitigate these threats among human rights defenders, the media and other stakeholders. This Strategic Plan thus builds on CIPESA’s achievements and is informed by internal reflections on successes and challenges as well as consultations with multiple stakeholders led by a team of external consultants. The Plan emphasises the need for CIPESA to remain a thought leader and network builder in the arena of inclusive ICT for development, governance and human rights in Africa. To achieve this CIPESA will grow its reach to cover countries where digital rights are less adequately addressed, including Francophone and Lusophone Africa; increase engagements with the private sector, legal fraternity, law enforcement and academia; diversify funding; and improve overall organisational operations.

SECTION ONE

1.1. Who We Are

CIPESA was established in 2004 in response to the findings of the Louder Voices Report for the UK's then Department for International Development (DFID), which cited the lack of easy, affordable and timely access to information about ICT-related issues and processes as a key barrier to effective and inclusive ICT policy making in Africa. Our work continues to respond to a shortage of information, resources and actors consistently working at the nexus of technology, human rights and society.

Initially set up with a focus on research in East and Southern African countries, we have since expanded our work to include advocacy, capacity development and movement building across the African continent.

1.2 Vision and Mission Statements



Vision:

To be Africa's leading ICT policy and governance think tank



Mission:

To promote inclusive and effective use of ICT in Africa for improved governance and livelihoods.

1.3 Our core values

- **Professionalism:** We personally commit to continuous improvement and professional growth. We take pride in producing high-quality work and delivering exceptional service to internal and external stakeholders. We exhibit pride in professional appearance, language and behaviour. We assume responsibility for a clean and safe work environment. We maintain composure in challenging situations. We respect others, express sincere appreciation, and positively influence those around us.
- **Teamwork:** Teamwork plays a vital role in accomplishing our vision and mission. At CIPESA, we work towards providing support to one another, working cooperatively, respecting each other's views, and making our work environment fun and enjoyable.
- **Accountability:** We promote a sense of duty, obligation and willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions. CIPESA staff are accountable to stakeholders for their actions, promote efficient and effective use of resources, and pursue value for money in all our undertakings. In addition, the staff and Board are responsible for their actions, free from conflict of interest, and uphold the organisation's credibility.
- **Innovativeness:** We constantly strive to redefine the standard of excellence in everything we do. Therefore, we are open to ideas that challenge conventional wisdom and drive innovation. The only constant in life is change and we believe that in order to stay relevant we must constantly improve with society's changing needs.

In fulfilling its objectives, CIPESA is guided by the following principles:

Ownership: The ownership of each activity needs to be clear and recognised by all concerned. In all the countries where CIPESA implements its activities, sustainability requires that the local actors participating in an activity are willing to be and are ultimately responsible for its results.

Demand responsiveness: Activities must respond to local demand and offer location-specific advocacy strategies. Building local ownership is one key part of this and is important to properly assess, represent and prioritise local needs in our work.

Multi-stakeholder involvement: ICT is a cross-cutting issue among development sectors and CIPESA's model is based on the involvement of both state and non-state actors in programme implementation. We rely on elaborate national, regional and global networks in the implementation of activities.

Capacity building: The local actors and stakeholders that CIPESA works with require skills and institutional capacity development to understand and effectively participate in ICT policy processes at national, regional and international levels.

Partnerships/collaborations: CIPESA understands that the barriers to effective participation in ICT policy processes cannot be tackled in isolation. We thus leverage partnerships to mobilise expertise and capabilities necessary to achieve the results.

Learning by doing: Over the last years, CIPESA has created impact in more ways than one as judged by the achievements it has had so far. We strive to ensure lessons learned inform the design of future interventions.

Inclusivity: We believe in equitable access to the use of digital technologies for participation in socio-economic life. Our work focuses on improving digital access for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities, youth, refugees and women.

1.4. Key Achievements To-date

- **Increased research on internet policy and digital rights in Africa.**

We are research and thought leaders in a number of ICT areas. We have consistently researched and documented the state of internet policy and governance by annually publishing the State of Internet Freedom in Africa report since 2014. We have mapped the internet laws and policies in over 40 African countries. The reports have covered topical issues on privacy, freedom of expression, surveillance, right to information, intermediary liability, among others. We have also analysed actors and issues relevant to the UN Human Rights Committee peer review processes over 16 African countries. We have thus become a knowledge and information broker that conducts multi-methods research which informs and drives ICT policy advocacy in Africa.

- **Advanced internet freedom and policy debate in Africa.**

CIPESA possesses considerable convening power and plays a leading role in networks that work to advance the use of technology for public good, which includes fostering digital rights. Since 2014, CIPESA has hosted the annual Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica) – in Uganda, South Africa (2017), Ghana (2018), Ethiopia (2019), Zambia (2022) and virtually in 2020 and 2021. We have also held public dialogues and participated in a series of events with several internet actors within and outside Africa to deliberate on how to improve internet policy on the continent. CIPESA has consistently participated in digital rights spaces such as the Stockholm Internet Forum (SIF) RightsCon, internet governance forums at national, regional and global level.

- **Strengthened the knowledge and capacity of civic actors in internet freedom advocacy and digital security and safety.**

We have trained over 100 organisations on digital safety and internet freedom advocacy. The Level-Up programme has for instance strengthened participating entities' organisational and information systems while also improving their understanding of digital safety practices. Moreso, the CIPESA media and academic fellowship programme launched in 2017 has benefited 17 fellows representing eastern and western Africa, Asia and USA. The learning and experiences of the academic fellows was used to inform CIPESA's contributions to the curriculum review and development for a Master's programme in eGovernance at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.

- **Grown our capacity as a re-granting organisation.**

In 2019, CIPESA initiated the Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF), which provides rapid response grants to initiatives advancing digital rights in Africa while also building a community of practice for advocacy, learning and exchange. As of mid-2022, the ADRF had provided a total of USD 649,000 in sub-grants to 52 initiatives covering 39 countries. We also coordinated the Sida-funded ICT4Democracy in East Africa network, launched in 2011. The network provided sub-grants to six main human rights NGOs and many smaller ones in the region.

- **Attracted regional and international recognition for internet freedom work.**

CIPESA is well-regarded as a convener and network builder in the area of internet freedom. We are a member of various African and international initiatives such as the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Global Network Initiative (GNI), World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA), IFEX, the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), the #Keepiton campaign and #RestoreDataRights movement. CIPESA also coordinates the Africa Internet Rights Alliance (AIRA), which comprises 11 organisations working on digital rights in eastern, southern and western Africa. CIPESA's work feeds into regional and global digital rights and democracy conversations, norm-setting and human rights compliance assessments such as the United Nations Peer Review (UPR) and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Mechanisms and reports of U.N. Special Rapporteurs, as well as engagements with regional bodies such as the European Union, African Union, East African Community, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Increasing access by state and non-state stakeholders to research and information resources to broaden their understanding of issues and participation in international processes and progressive national policy-making as well as translating the implications of regional and international processes and norms to the regional and national contexts are key areas of CIPESA's work.

- **Extending our regional reach in both programme and country focus areas.**

Initially formed to address countries in East and Southern Africa, CIPESA has expanded her work in other African countries to include those in West and North Africa. In the programmatic expansion arena, we have added digital inclusion for persons with disabilities and refugees; and digital resilience.

- **Contributed to improving the legal and policy environment for civil rights and freedoms online.**

Informed by the lack of easy, affordable and timely access to information about ICT-related issues and processes as a key barrier to effective and inclusive ICT policy making in Africa, CIPESA has been involved in growing knowledge about progressive ICT practice and working to address shortage of information, resources and being a nexus to technology, human rights and society. CIPESA has been grounded in legal and policy analysis where policies, bills and laws have been analysed on a regular basis, gaps identified and proposals for progressive reform made. These analyses have informed response action for emerging stakeholders such as media and CSOs engagements and requests for input from governments and partners across the continent. CIPESA will continue to leverage efforts that aim to better the legal, policy and practice environment for digital rights and freedoms on the continent.

Select project highlights

The Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF)

In 2019, CIPESA launched the ADRF, aimed at growing the number of individuals and organisations that work to advance digital rights in Africa. The 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. A total of USD 649,000 has been awarded to 52 initiatives working to advance digital rights across the continent. Winning entities undertake research, capacity building, awareness raising, advocacy and stakeholder engagements in 39 countries including, among others, Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, and Uganda.



Digital rights



Advocacy



Digital literacy



Litigation



Research



policy analysis



Digital security



USD 649,000

Awarded to

52

initiatives working to advance digital rights across the continent



SECTION TWO

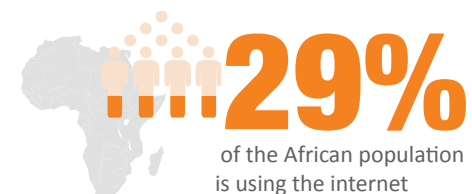
2.1. Our Context: Challenges and Opportunities

We have observed an increased commitment by both state and non-state actors to recognise the important role of the internet in advancing development and driving economic growth. This recognition goes to the highest levels of the international development system as ICT has been identified as a catalytic driver to enable the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),¹ especially SDG4 (Quality Education), SDG5 (Gender Equality), SDG9 (Industry, innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The African Union Agenda 2063, the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030)² and the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) all present opportunities to advance national interventions in harnessing technology for transparency and accountability, citizens' participation, service delivery, innovation and respect for human rights.

However, several challenges still impede Africa's digital transformation agenda. For instance, only 29% of the population is using the internet in Africa compared to 51% globally. A 2019 report by the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) found that only 10 out of 45 African countries were able to afford internet connectivity.³ Other digital transformation challenges include lack of electricity, low digital skills, and gender digital divide disparities. Likewise, new technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, big data, facial recognition and machine learning present new challenges for data use and opportunities for Africa's digital development.

A majority of African countries are parties to key international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and regional instruments such as African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. However, there is an increasing decline in democracy and internet freedoms, with rising violation of digital rights such as arrests and intimidation of internet users, a proliferation of retrogressive laws and regulations, limited judicial oversight over surveillance, limited digital safety and security skills by civic actors worsened by increased internet disruptions by state actors. These repressive measures have been aggravated by the actions of state actors in the wake of combating online harms such as disinformation, hate speech, and child online abuse.

Increased development partner interventions are aiding the promotion and advancement of digital development and digital rights in Africa. This has led to an increase in the number of civic actors working towards this cause. However, some of these organisations face limitations of reach, skills, resources, and consistency in engagement in digital rights work. Addressing the above emerging issues in the digital environment requires building a digital resilient regional organisation. It also requires strengthening internal structures as well as building partnerships with external allies.



¹ The role of icts in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs, https://unctad.org/system/files/non-official_document/cstd2016_p06_DoreenBogdan_ITU_en.pdf

² Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020 - 2030) <https://au.int/en/documents/20200518/digital-transformation-strategy-africa-2020-2030>

³ Internet connectivity defined as 5GB of mobile prepaid data costing 2% or less of the average monthly income

2.2. SWOT Analysis

The prevailing context, together with an analysis of our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) as well as the stakeholder analysis have informed the determination of CIPESA's strategic direction for the upcoming years.



Strengths

- Sustained foray into new thematic areas of work and improved regional reach
- Ability to conduct cutting edge ICT policy and legal research, analysis and documentation of thematic issues
- Respected brand and thought leadership in ICT policy research and advocacy
- Strong networking and partnership building and retention
- Diversity of staff expertise and experience
- Conducive staff working environment
- Convening of stakeholders at national, regional and international events
- Capacity building and re-granting initiatives to civic actors in the continent



Weaknesses

- Inadequate mix of funding sources, especially low on core funders
- Inadequate mechanisms for Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- Shortage of skills in key organisational activity areas such as research, fundraising, M&E, public communication, and advocacy.



Opportunities

- Increased digitalisation, which makes CIPESA's work more relevant i.e. increased interest in the digital space; development of digital economies; and new and emerging technologies that serve to advance digital rights
- Digital divide which requires continuous advocacy e.g. inclusion work on women and persons with disabilities is attracting more donor/stakeholder attention
- Increasing donor interest in funding ICT-related issues
- Existence of willing partners to collaborate with CIPESA in more countries
- Recognition of digital rights as critical in different human rights instruments /existence of international human rights monitoring mechanisms
- Recognition of the need to advance digital transformation by both state and non-state actors, including emerging policy interventions in ICT on the continent.



Threats

- Shrinking civic space both offline and online, including hostile political environment in focus areas; proliferation of bad laws and regulations; escalation of disinformation/misinformation
- Increase in new ICT policy and digital rights-based organisations in the region
- Shifting donor priorities that take funding away from CIPESA's focus areas.

2.3. Stakeholder Analysis

We work with networks, individuals and organisations (private sector, governmental, academic, civil society) across the region, and we are key members of national and several African and international initiatives that aim to improve the inclusiveness of the digital society. This mapping and analysis of CIPESA's stakeholders has partly informed our strategic direction.

Stakeholder	What they do	What should CIPESA do to benefit from them
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run day-to-day operations of the organisation • Project implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide continuous professional development and incentives for staff retention.
Board members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide strategic direction and exercise oversight over management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide timely reporting to the Board. • Hold regular Board and Board Committee meetings
Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise their right to information and expression; • Obey just laws; • Defend the Constitution; • Pay taxes; • Hold the government accountable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite them to participate in CIPESA events; • Involve them in CIPESA needs assessments and research; • Publish and share accessible research and advocacy reports.
NGOs/civic actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy; • Complementary role with government in service delivery; • Contribute to laws through analysis of bills and laws; Act as government watchdogs for transparency and accountability; • Capacity building and training of citizens and government officials; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships and collaboration - Joint advocacy work, lobbying, common voice; • Solicit for funding from them; • Continuous engagement; sharing of CIPESA resources with them; • Invite them to CIPESA events • Build their capacity in CIPESA focus areas.
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding; • Assist in amplifying programme outputs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen financial management and impact reporting. • Forge new and manage existing relationships •

Stakeholder	What they do	What should CIPESA do to benefit from them
Media/ journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the public on current affairs, • Educate the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite them to cover and report on CIPESA activities; • Build their capacity in reporting on ICT, digital rights and other CIPESA focus areas • Share with them knowledge and information products, including research reports. • Continuous engagement including through fellowships
Academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with them primary data and knowledge products, including research reports • Build their capacity in understanding digital rights/internet freedom issues • Invite them to participate in CIPESA events. • Continuous engagement including through fellowships and research advisory
Members of Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact laws and regulations • Adopt policies • Provide oversight of executive actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build their capacity in understanding digital rights/internet freedom issues; • Submit commentary on relevant laws and policies, bills and amendments
Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer justice; • Adjudicate disputes • Review laws and regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with them knowledge products, e.g., reports • Invite them to participate in CIPESA events.
Line ministries and related agencies e.g. Ministry of ICT, Communications and Data Regulators	<p>Adopt and enforce laws and regulations Initiate and implement policies</p>	
Intergovernmental Bodies e.g. Regional Economic Communities, African Union Level Bodies and UN Level bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of human rights standards and principles • Provide platforms for state accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of relevant human rights standards and principles • Engagement on stakeholder needs and issues • Share with them knowledge products e.g., reports • Invite them to participate in CIPESA events.

SECTION THREE

3.1. Strategic Priorities

CIPESA's strategic direction for the next five years (2023-2027) was informed by a review of the operational context including external and internal factors, the policy context, institutional framework, the gains, gaps, emerging issues and lessons learnt from the implementation of the previous strategy. The strategic objectives and strategies described in this Plan have been approved by our Board of Directors and they seek to consolidate the achievements the organisation has registered since its establishment, harness opportunities, and address the weaknesses and challenges identified.

3.2. Strategic Goal and Objectives

Strategic Goal: Contribute to the adoption of inclusive, transparent and democratic ICT policy that supports development, governance and human rights in Africa.

Strategic Objectives (SO)

The strategic objectives for 2023-2027 focus on the six thematic/programming areas namely: civic participation; internet freedom and governance; data governance; digital economy; digital resilience; and digital inclusion.

SO1: Promote online participation of civic actors in Africa.

An open civic space is important for civil society to survive and flourish. It allows people to freely express themselves, assert their rights, hold duty bearers accountable, influence development and engage freely with others in a peaceful manner. Civic space in several African countries is shrinking due to restrictive legislative measures constraining the rights to freedom of expression, information, association and assembly. In the digital era, the need to promote civic participation online is based on the premise that deteriorating civic space offline has led actors to turn to online spaces to enjoy their right to freedom of expression, assembly, association, and privacy.

SO2. Promote and advance internet freedom and governance in Africa

Internet freedom and governance have become compelling issues that have attracted attention from different actors. Increasing access and usage of the internet in Africa, driven by social media has attracted the attention of authorities. Some countries have invested in and harnessed the power of ICTs for their national development. Others have placed restrictions on the openness of the internet and implemented limitations to digital rights. These developments thus need radical approaches to ensure that the internet remains an open tool for development and enjoyment of basic rights.

SO3. Promote the effective and efficient use and protection of data by state and non-state actors

An increasing number of people in Africa are accessing the internet and mobile devices. ICTs have enabled communications, interactions and transactions which are empowering citizens, enhancing civic agency, promoting participation and improving service delivery. However, increased digitalisation and use of emerging technologies means that state and non-state actors are actively collecting and processing more personal data in the absence of comprehensive data protection safeguards. These developments call for promotion of effective and efficient use and protection of personal data by both state and non-state actors.

SO4. Enhance the digital resilience and adaptability of CSOs in the face of cyber threats

The ever-increasing digital evolution requires organisations to be able to prepare for and respond to threats and disasters; and to mitigate or reduce risk exposure on digital platforms. Digital resilience is thus becoming a growing concern for many civil society organisations, particularly social justice actors, who are seeking ways to actively utilise and align the use of digital platforms in their day-to-day work.

SO5. Promote equitable access to and use of digital technologies for the most underserved population

There is a growing need across the globe to ensure equitable access to and use of digital technologies for participation in socio-economic life. However, there remains a persistent digital divide in access to ICTs especially for underserved, marginalised and vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, youth, rural populations, refugees and women. There is thus a need to increase the availability of relevant information and content for these groups by producing relevant evidence-based research; mainstreaming digital access issues in conversations on digital rights; growing the capacity of diverse actors to research on and advocate for meaningful connectivity and digital accessibility; and engaging relevant state and non-state actors.

SO6. Promote economic growth through digital technologies

The digital economy, including cross-border services, digital trade, and electronic commerce (eCommerce), contributes to social-economic development by expanding market access for local businesses, promoting inclusive trade, creating jobs, and expanding tax revenue for governments to provide essential services. As the scope of digital innovation expands around the world, so must appropriate considerations for national and regional policies and regulations needed to facilitate greater economic competitiveness and inclusiveness while respecting human rights.

3.3. Strategic Actions

CIPESA will continue to undertake multiple actions to realise the strategic objectives laid out for this planning period. These are briefly explained below:

Research and documentation

CIPESA will continue to conduct research on the key thematic issues. In addition to tapping into the expertise of our existing partnerships, we shall reach out to university faculty and graduate students undertaking research in ICT policy for collaboration. Producing research on key issues affecting the digital civic space is crucial to creating awareness and conducting advocacy and engagements with multiple stakeholders.

Knowledge and skills development

To achieve the intended results in different focus areas, it is important to improve the knowledge, expertise and competence of key partners and implementers. CIPESA will continue to build and strengthen the capacity of its partners including civil society organisations, grassroots communities, government representatives and individuals in advocating for adoption and implementation of progressive ICT policies. Collaborative efforts will continue to be undertaken to strengthen the capacity of these actors to understand risks to digital rights and how to mitigate them.

Policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement

The lack of easy, affordable and timely access to information about ICT-related issues and processes remains one of the key challenges in Africa. CIPESA will contribute to positive legal and policy reforms, raise awareness about key issues, provide useful information to assist African participation in policy-making, and stir debate by convening productive gatherings on our thematic areas. Advocacy and stakeholder engagements will be implemented through hosting workshops and convenings that bring stakeholders together and provide opportunities to share lessons and experiences.

Strategic Public Interest Litigation

Over the past years, litigation has proved to be a tool for addressing restrictions on freedom of expression, free flow of information and countering privacy infringements online in countries with repressive internet regimes. CIPESA has been undertaking initiatives such as capacity building of lawyers, conducting case surgeries, contributing to digital rights litigation by submitting amicus briefs to courts and mobilising stakeholders for collaboration so as to promote strategic public internet litigation of digital rights on the continent. However, litigation remains under-utilised because of a lack of effective collaboration between different strategic actors, including lawyers, activists, academics, and technical experts. Under this strategic action, CIPESA will continue to promote best practice for more effective collaboration across disciplinary silos in digital rights litigation.

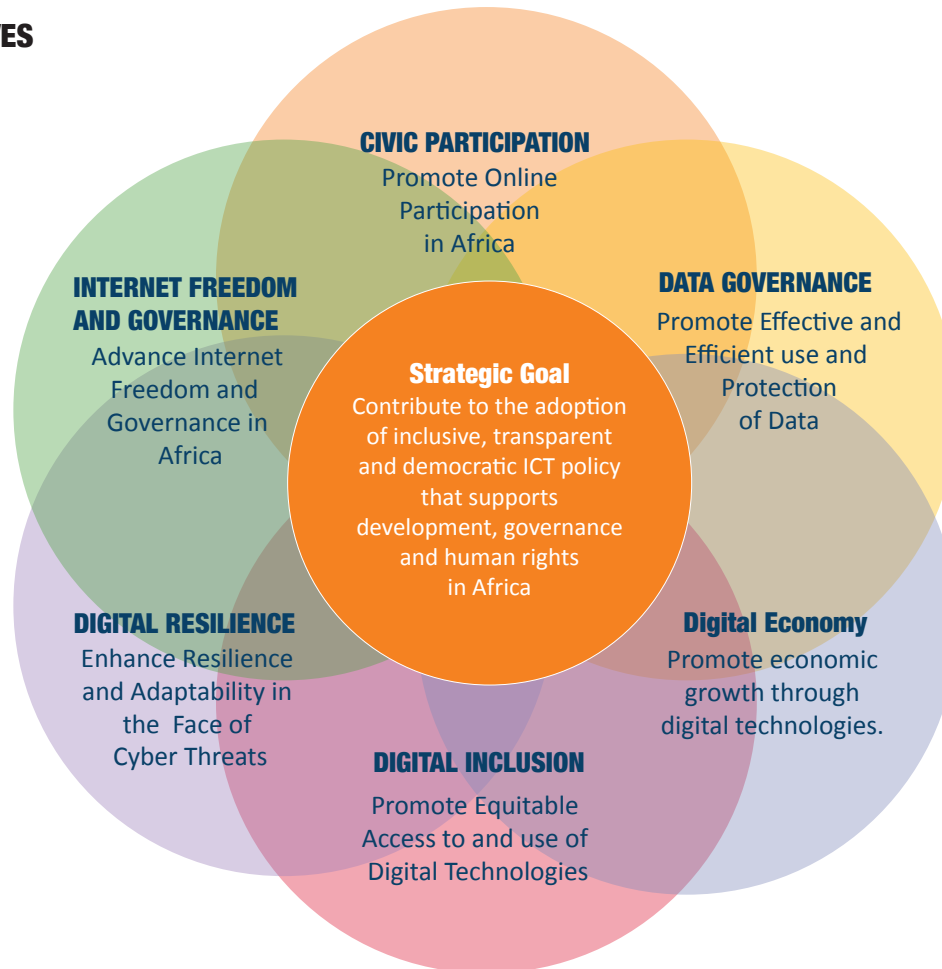
Movement Building and strategic alliances

While using existing and new networks in the region and globally, we will work to capture and widely distribute our programme outputs (virtually and face-to-face). Key regional institutions of focus include the East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Africa Union (AU), Africa Freedom of Exchange (AFEX) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). At international level, we shall aim to work with the networks such as Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Global Network Initiative (GNI), World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA), and IFEX, to advance our work. We will continue to feed into regional and global digital rights and democracy conversations as part of our affiliation with digital rights movements such as the #Keepiton campaign, #RestoreDataRights and the Africa Internet Rights Alliance (AIRA), which CIPESA coordinates. We will also work with norm-setting and human rights compliance assessment such as the United Nations Peer Review (UPR) and African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) Mechanisms (to which CIPESA has Observer Status) and reports of U.N. Special Rapporteurs. This collaboration will enable CIPESA to tap into extensive networks, which in turn will enable us to make a bigger impact.



CIPESA STRATEGY MAP

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



STRATEGIC ACTIONS



Research and Documentation



Knowledge and skills development



Policy Advocacy and Stakeholders



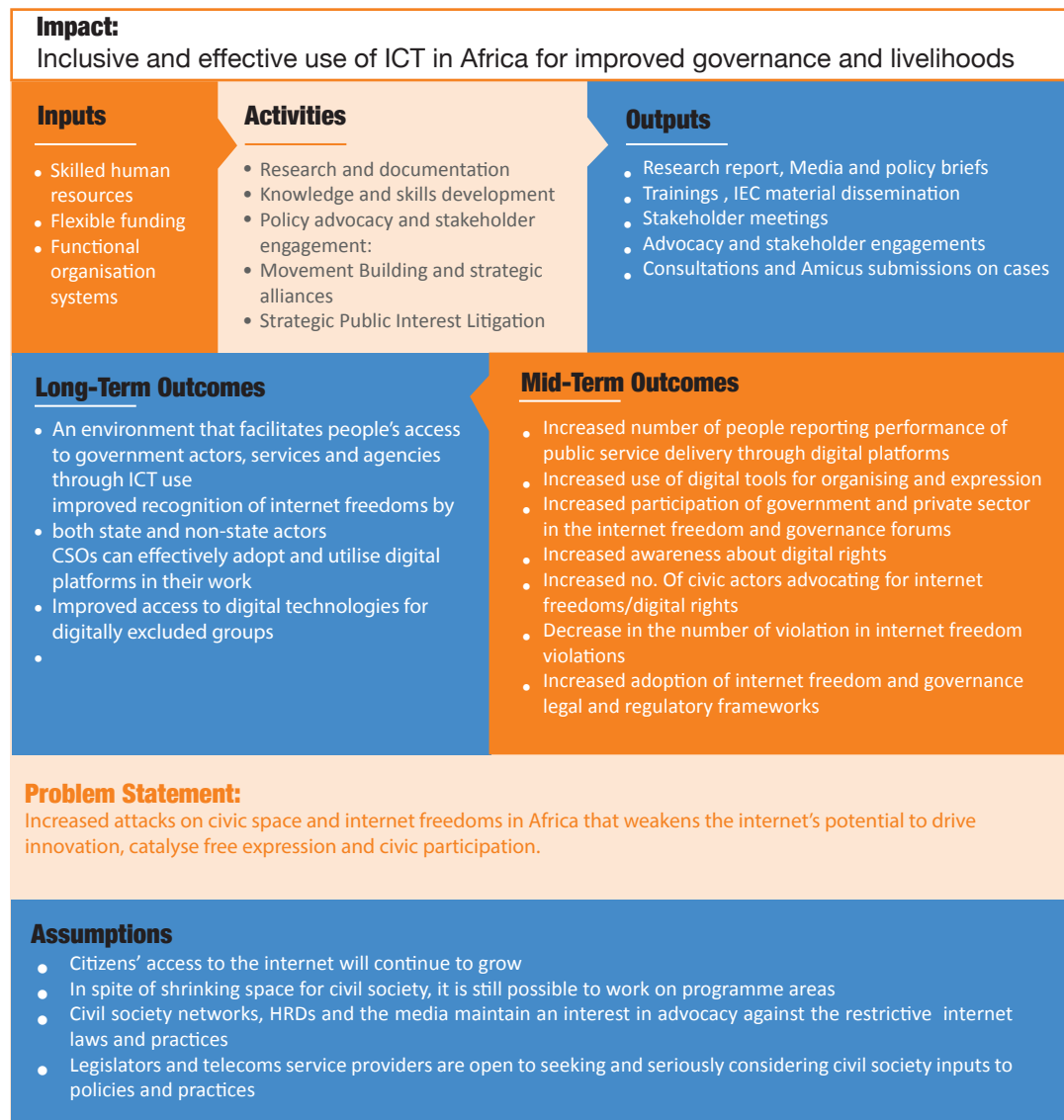
Movement Building \ Networking



strategic litigation

3.4. CIPESA's Theory of Change

In order to promote inclusive and effective use of ICT in Africa for improved governance and livelihoods, and be Africa's leading ICT policy and governance think tank, CIPESA will in the period January 2023 to December 2027 focus on six thematic areas namely: Internet Freedom and Governance; Data Governance; Civic Participation; Digital Resilience; and Digital Inclusion as a cross-cutting issue. This will be achieved through undertaking five strategic approaches – Research and Documentation; Capacity Building; Policy Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement; Movement Building/Networking and Strategic Alliances; and Strategic Litigation. We have set specific outcomes for each of these strategic approaches.



SECTION FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION

CIPESA recognises that successful implementation is dependent on several factors, including the competent teams and systems, which must be well defined to facilitate the smooth execution of the Plan. This section presents the leadership structure and systems to translate the Plan into results.

4.1 LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

Governance, Management and Coordination Implementation is made possible by our team members, the systems and processes in place. Below is a description of positions and their roles in enabling us to actualise this Strategic Plan. See full organisation structure in Annex 2.



Executive Director

Provide strategic guidance to the organisation, including on matters of programming, partnerships development, and fundraising. Provide oversight over programmatic and financial resources.



Programmes Manager

Communicate and coordinate project activities with Project Managers both at local and regional networks; Oversee administration of the day-to-day operations including administration of project sub-grants to local and regional civil society organisations.



Legal Officer

Provide legal counsel to the organisation, undertake research and review existing legal and regulatory ICT policies related to the organisation's thematic areas.



Public Engagement Manager

Coordinate and act as key liaison contact for organisation's partners and network; Facilitate knowledge building and knowledge sharing; and lead the organisation's advocacy efforts.



Research Manager

Organise, plan and coordinate research



Communications Officer

Oversee organisation communication and public relations



Financial Manager

Oversee and manage organisation financial and administration processes



Administrative Coordinator

Oversee and maintain organisation's administration to include - Preparing business correspondence; managing office filing system; Preparing meeting minutes, and internal support materials.



Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

Support organisation monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning processes

Table 03. Roles and function of key positions

4.2 INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS

Changes in work environments and technology advancements call for the agility of organisations to adjust or adapt. It is therefore essential for CIPESA to have multilingual/national, adequately remunerated and incentivised staff with the skills and ability to support planned activities; expand focus countries to include those where digital rights issues are less adequately addressed, including Francophone and Lusophone Africa; and increase engagement with the private sector, the legal fraternity, judiciary, law enforcement and academia.

To actualise this Strategic Plan, we will need to have strong and effective institutional systems in place. Particular focus will be on institutional strengthening by building the knowledge and skill set of CIPESA staff to ensure they are best placed to implement and deliver on the stated strategic actions. This will be done by providing opportunities for key staff to attain certifications in emerging digital technologies and organisational practices and hiring multilingual staff. We will also develop and update key organisational instruments such as the Human Resource Policy, Financial Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and strategies on fundraising, communications, advocacy, and organisational digital resilience.

4.3 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Our monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach ensures we track progress toward our goals, collect and use data, document lessons learnt, and share knowledge and best practices with our members and other partners. The system will be an iterative process of monitoring, evaluating, learning, adjusting, and adapting. We shall aim to internally monitor, document and evaluate thematic programme implementation by conducting annual monitoring exercises. This will guide us to examine whether the set activity plans are in line with overall plan objectives and identified indicators. The monitoring of progress will be undertaken on a regular basis to capture completed and ongoing activities, challenges and feedback received from stakeholders. This will be achieved through outreach field visits, email and phone communication with partners and beneficiaries. We shall thus develop a dedicated Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning strategy to guide implementation of this Strategic Plan.

A mid-term and end-of-term evaluations will be conducted by an external evaluator after two and five years, respectively. The review exercise will be comprehensive, covering all programme areas of the Strategic Plan and will indicate the strength and weaknesses in the implementation over the period so far covered and outline the opportunities and foreseen challenges. The review would also assess the programme performance in terms of the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The results of the mid-term review will guide the implementation of the CIPESA Strategic Plan during the second half of the planning period, provide information for any necessary adjustments in the Strategic Plan, and assist in the revision of outputs and budgets. The results of the final review will provide information for developing the next CIPESA Strategic Plan.

4.4. COMMUNICATION

Implementing our strategy will require significant communications capacities. This will require developing a robust communications and advocacy strategy outlining how we will use different communication channels to reach our defined stakeholders at national, regional and international levels. Moreover, significant attention shall be paid to broaden CIPESA's brand identity, visibility and presence online, including of team members on social media platforms. The strategy will cover key activities such as regular updates of our digital communication channels including the website and social media channels; generation of media content; production of information, education, communication materials; strategic media engagements; and periodic newsletter production. Also, CIPESA will explore new ways of online engagement, profiling and dissemination of its work, especially to its online audience, including youth, women, marginalised groups and minorities. To this end, CIPESA will invest in building its online presence, acquiring online audiences, measurement of performance, and expanding its engagement in online platforms. The internal capacities of the communication office and the staff at large, shall be enhanced to enable the organisation harness the power of digital and reap the dividends moving forward.

4.5. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Implementing this Strategic Plan will not come without risks. We have thus identified the following risks, their associated potential impact and possible actions to mitigate them.









	Risk	Likelihood of Risk	Potential Impact of Risk	Risk Mitigation Plan/Actions
	Risks affecting realisation of strategic objectives			
Description	Enactment of new laws that constrain freedom of expression, violate privacy, free assembly and the operations of CSOs			Together with our network of actors, we shall continuously advocate for adoption of progressive laws and regulations.
Category	External	High	High	
	Risks affecting realisation of organisation Outcomes/ Outputs			
Description	Partners and funders show insufficient interest in supporting strategic actions			Partners and funders shall be approached with clear strategic objectives on why they need to support CIPESA. This will also involve developing and implementing a robust communications plan and a fundraising strategy that will pave the way for having meaningful engagements with partners and funders.
Category	External	Low	High	
Description	Hostile political climate and civil unrest in the region			As aspects of this risk are most likely unforeseen and beyond our control, no definitive mitigation plan is in place. However, we shall strive to keep abreast of any developments via news and security updates and our own situation analyses. Where security threats abound, we will hold activities in countries where there are minimal risks to project staff and beneficiaries.
Category	External	High	High	
	Risks affecting organisation management systems			
Description	Loss of key organisation personnel			CIPESA Human Resource Policy has clear guidelines on resignation procedures that all staff adhere to in order to avoid creating undue vacuums.
Category	Internal/ external	Low	Medium	
Description	Poor adherence to internal systems, policies and procedures to support implementation of the strategic actions			Ensure all organisational strategies and policies are followed; Ensure project communication and collaboration spaces are constantly reviewed, and updated.
Category	External			

Table 04. Risk Analysis and management plan

SECTION FIVE: FINANCING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

5.1 Funding Sources and Revenue Estimates

In order to implement this Strategic Plan over the planned period, CIPESA will require a total of USD 7,180,000 over the next five years to support the implementation of the Plan. This will be generated through a robust fundraising strategy that maps and reaches out to diverse partners including governments, private sector, civil society and the philanthropic sector. Further, CIPESA will establish a sustainability fund (The CIPESA Reserve Fund) and diversify its income sources including by conducting income-generating activities such as offering consultancy services and making investments which would contribute to the organisation's overall budget and long-term sustainability.

Table 05
*Revenue Estimates
per Financial Year in USD*

(USD)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
Grants	1,300,000	1,500,000	1,700,000	1,850,000	2,050,000	6,900,000
Consultancies	30,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	100,000	280,000
Overall						7,180,000

5.2. Expenditure Estimates

The resources required for implementing the strategic objectives are tabulated in the table below showing the total amount of resources required for each of the strategic objectives and the corresponding estimates for each financial year.

Table 06:
*Expenditure Estimates
per Financial Year in USD*

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Digital Resilience	90,000	110,000	140,000	150,000	160,000
Civic Participation	250,000	250,000	260,000	280,000	290,000
Internet Freedom and Governance	380,000	450,000	500,000	550,000	660,000
Data Governance	250,000	270,000	270,000	280,000	320,000
Digital Inclusion	120,000	140,000	170,000	180,000	190,000
Institutional Strengthening	40,000	70,000	110,000	135,000	160,000
Programme Support	200,000	260,000	300,000	325,000	370,000
TOTAL	1,330,000	1,550,000	1,750,000	1,900,000	2,150,000

Annex 1. CIPESA'S Results Framework

Thematic area	Strategic objective	Strategic Actions	Outputs	Baseline	Immediate outcomes	Ultimate outcome	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Civic participation	Promote online participation of civic actors in Africa	<p>Research and documentation</p> <hr/> <p>Knowledge building and skills transfer</p> <hr/> <p>Advocacy and stakeholder engagements</p>	<p>Research report, Policy briefs</p> <hr/> <p>Trainings</p> <hr/> <p>Media and policy briefs, IEC material dissemination , meetings</p>	An open civic space is important for civil society to survive and flourish as it allows people to freely express themselves, assert their rights and hold power holders accountable, influence development and engage freely with others in a peaceful manner. Civic space in several African countries is on the decline due to restrictive legislative measures constraining freedom of expression, association and assembly. The need to promote digital civic participation is based on the premise that deteriorating civic space offline has led actors to turn to online spaces to enjoy their right to freedom of expression, assembly, association, and privacy.	Increased number of people reporting performance of public service delivery through digital platforms Increased use of digital tools for organising and expression	An environment that facilitates people's access to government actors, services and agencies through ICT use	<p>No. of reports produced</p> <p>No. of citations</p> <hr/> <p>No. of people trained</p> <hr/> <p>No. of laws, policies or procedures adopted, revised, stalled or repealed</p> <p>No. of stakeholders receiving CIPESA assistance engaged in advocacy interventions</p>
Internet Freedom and Governance	Promote and advance freedom and internet governance discourse in Africa	<p>Movement Building/ Networking and strategic alliances</p> <hr/> <p>Research and documentation</p> <hr/> <p>Capacity building</p> <hr/> <p>Strategic litigation</p> <hr/> <p>Advocacy and stakeholder engagements</p>	<p>Stakeholder meetings</p> <hr/> <p>Regional and country state of internet freedom reports; policy analysis</p> <hr/> <p>Trainings</p> <hr/> <p>Consultations and Amicus submissions on cases</p> <hr/> <p>Policy submissions, meetings</p>	Internet freedom and governance has become compelling issues attracting focus of different actors. Further increasing usage of the internet in Africa driven by social media, however, has in some countries attracted the attention of authorities, who are eager to provide caveats on the openness of the net and the range of freedoms which citizens and citizens' organisations enjoy online. These areas thus need a radical approach to ensure that the internet remains an open tool for development and enjoyment of basic rights including economic rights.	Increased participation of government and private sector in the internet freedom and governance forums Decrease in the number of violation in internet freedom violations Increased adoption of internet freedom and governance legal and regulatory frameworks	Improved recognition of internet freedoms by both state and non-state actors	<p>No. of alliances formed,</p> <p>No research reports produced</p> <p>No. of citations</p> <hr/> <p>No. of people trained</p> <hr/> <p>No. of laws, policies or procedures adopted, revised, stalled or repealed</p>

Thematic area	Strategic objective	Strategic Actions	Outputs	Baseline	Immediate outcomes	Ultimate outcome	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Data Governance	To promote the effective and efficient use and protection of data by both state and non-state actors.	<p>Research and documentation</p> <hr/> <p>Capacity building</p> <hr/> <p>Movement Building/ Networking and strategic alliances</p>	<p>Research reports, policy analyses</p> <hr/> <p>Trainings</p> <hr/> <p>Stakeholder meetings</p>	An increasingly large number of people in Africa are accessing modern communication technologies such as the internet and mobile phones. At the citizen-to-citizen level, a lot of conversations and actions are taking place via ICT. Many of these ICT-enabled interactions and discussions are empowering citizens, enhancing civic agency and promoting participation in various ways which democratic governments need to nurture. State and non-state actors are actively collecting user data without having adequate measures to protect this data. This calls for promoting the effective and efficient use and protection of data by both state and non-state actors.	<p>Increase in the number of data protection and governance laws</p> <hr/> <p>Increased use of open data and the Right to Information in improving service delivery</p>	Improved respect for of data protection and governance	<p>No. of reports, policy briefs produced,</p> <hr/> <p>No. of people trained</p> <hr/> <p>No. of alliances formed</p>
Digital Resilience	Enhance the digital resilience and adaptability of CSOs to adapt and recover from cyber threats	<p>Research and documentation</p> <hr/> <p>Movement Building/ Networking and strategic alliances</p> <hr/> <p>Capacity building</p>	<p>Research reports</p> <hr/> <p>Stakeholder meetings</p> <hr/> <p>Digital security training for civic actors</p>	The ever increasing digital evolution requires organisations to be able to prepare for and respond to threats and disasters; and to mitigate or reduce risk exposure on a digital platform. Digital resilience is thus becoming a growing concern for many civil society organisations which are seeking ways to actively utilise and align use of digital platforms in their day to day work.	Improved capacity of CSOs in absorption, recovery and adaptability significant cyber threats	CSOs can effectively adopt and utilise digital platforms in their work	<p>No. of reports produced</p> <hr/> <p>No. of alliances formed</p> <hr/> <p>No. of people trained</p>

Thematic area	Strategic objective	Strategic Actions	Outputs	Baseline	Immediate outcomes	Ultimate outcome	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Digital Inclusion (cross-cutting)	Promote equitable access to and use of digital technologies for the most underserved population.	Research and documentation	<p>Research reports, policy analyses</p> <hr/> <p>Advocacy and stakeholder engagements</p>	The need to ensure equitable access to and use of digital technologies for participation in socio-economic life is becoming a growing need across the globe. However, there remains a persistent gap in digital access for vulnerable users such as persons with disabilities, refugees and women. There is thus a need to raise availability of information on ICT and disability in Africa by producing relevant evidence-based research; mainstreaming disability rights issues in conversations about technology access and digital rights; growing the capacity of diverse actors to research on and advocate for meaningful connectivity and digital accessibility; and engaging key actors such as telecom companies and regional bodies.	<p>Improved legal and regulatory frameworks targeting the adaptability of digital technologies for the digitally excluded groups</p> <p>Increased use of digital technologies among excluded groups</p>	Improved access to digital technologies for digitally excluded groups	<p>No. of reports, policy briefs produced</p> <p>No. of laws, policies or procedures adopted, revised, stalled or repealed</p> <hr/> <p>No. of stakeholders receiving CIPESA assistance engaged in advocacy interventions</p>
Institutional Strengthening	Strengthen the knowledge and skill set of CIPESA staff	Capacity building	<p>Staff Certifications in emerging digital technology concepts</p> <p>Developed and update key organisation instruments such as human resource policy, M&E strategy, Fundraising strategy, Communications and advocacy plan</p>	Changes in work environments and technology advancements call for organisations agility to adjust to these changes. It is therefore essential for CIPESA to have multilingual/national, adequately remunerated and incentivised staff with the skills and ability to support organisation activities; expand focus countries to include those where digital rights issues are less adequately addressed, including Francophone and Lusophone Africa and increase engagement with the private sector, legal fraternity, judiciary, law enforcement and academia.	<p>Strengthened capacity of CIPESA staff to deliver on the thematic areas</p> <hr/> <p>CIPESA is a well governed organization</p> <hr/> <p>Improved ability and operational resources for CIPESA to remain a thought leader and network builder in the inclusive ICT for development, governance and human rights arena in Africa.</p>	Expand markets and reach of CIPESA by adopting more technical systems/ approaches/ analytics to track what is happening to report better beyond the contractual obligations.	<p>No. of new staff recruited</p> <p>No. of developed and adopted organisational policies</p> <p>% increase in revenue received</p> <p>No. of focus countries added</p>



CIPESA

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