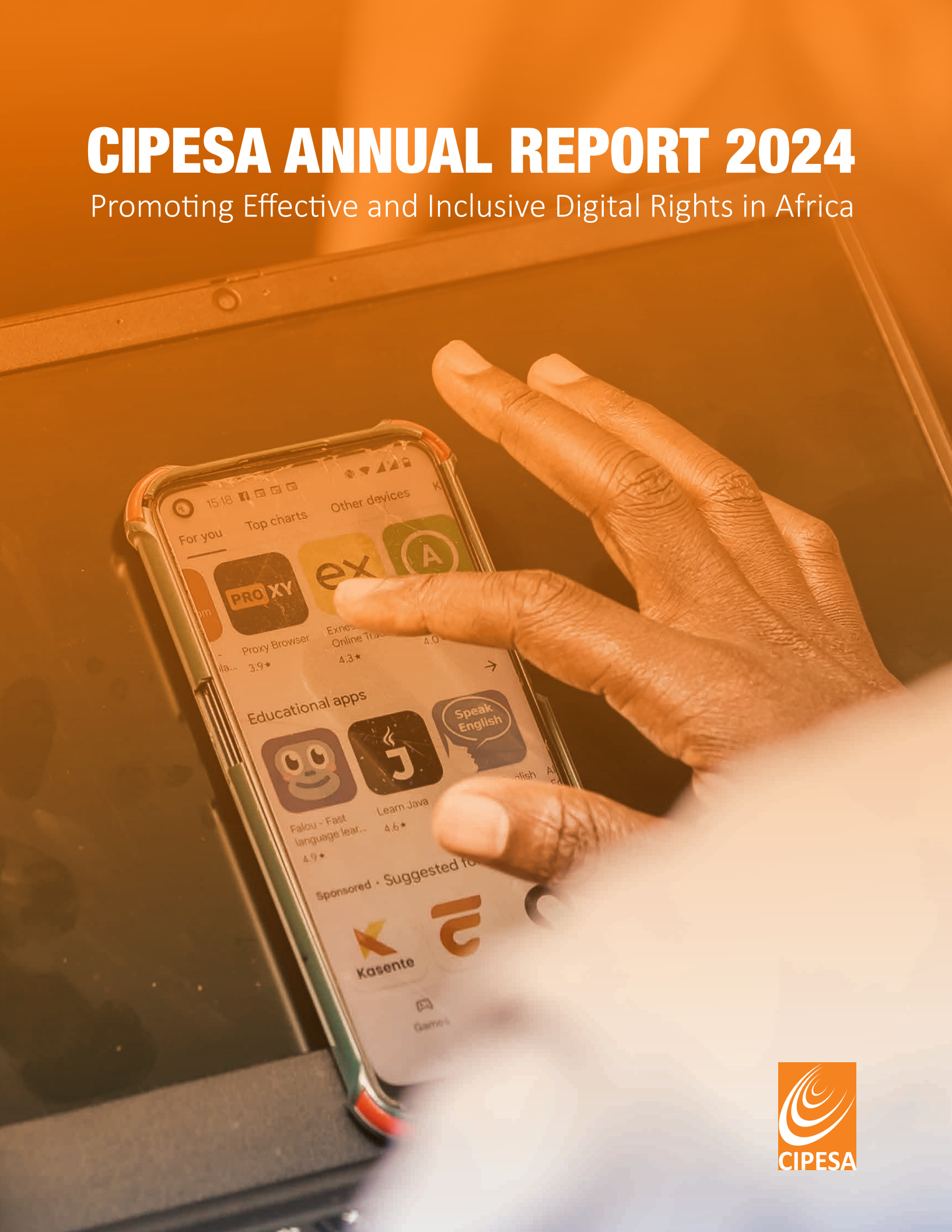
CIPESA ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Promoting Effective and Inclusive Digital Rights in Africa



CIPESA

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.

Strategic Objectives

1. Promote online participation of civic actors in Africa.
2. Promote and advance internet freedom and governance in Africa
3. Promote the effective and efficient use and protection of data by state and non-state actors
4. Enhance the digital resilience and adaptability of CSOs in the face of cyber threats
5. Promote equitable access to and use of digital technologies for the most underserved population
6. Promote economic growth through digital technologies

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Acronyms

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACME	African Centre For Media Excellence
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AGORA	Agora Centre for Research
CEPIL	Centre For Public Interest Law
CDP	Senegal's Personal Data Protection Commission
CIPE	Center for International Private Enterprise
CIPESA	Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FIFAfrica	Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa
GNI	Global Network Initiative
GIF	Greater Internet Freedom
GIZ	The German Society for International Cooperation Agency
EWMI	East West Management Institute
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
ICNL	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NHRIs	National Human Rights Institutions
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Foreword

While reflecting on our work over 2024, we noted the growing centrality of digital technologies in shaping Africa's governance, civic participation, economic resilience, and fundamental rights. It was also a year that reminded us of the duality that defines the digital age where progress and repression often coexist in the same virtual spaces, particularly in many of the countries where we work.

Guided by our 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) deepened its commitment to advancing a digital ecosystem that is inclusive, open, and respectful of human rights. Across the continent, we witnessed increasing adoption of technology in public service delivery and elections, growth in civic tech innovations, and enhanced discourse on data governance and digital inclusion. Yet, we also documented growing threats: arbitrary internet shutdowns, intrusive surveillance, disinformation, digital exclusion, and a shrinking digital civic space.

Amidst these evolving challenges and opportunities, CIPESA remained steadfast, leveraging research, convenings, policy advocacy, and capacity building to influence positive change. Our work reached new geographies and communities, and we built stronger alliances across civil society, media, academia, the private sector, and government.

In 2024, our work across Africa encountered a range of challenges, each of which offered critical learning and reaffirmed the need for resilience, adaptability, and collaboration. Among the notable challenges were the various incidences of network disruptions and digital repression, particularly during electoral periods. Legal and policy backsliding in some countries threatened civic space, while emerging technologies including artificial intelligence and biometric systems presented new concerns, despite the opportunities they entail. Additionally, digital exclusion remained stark, with women, rural populations, and persons with disabilities facing systemic barriers to meaningful digital access and participation.

These challenges underscored the importance of building stronger local capacities, deepening multi-stakeholder partnerships, and enhancing evidence-based advocacy. In response, CIPESA placed renewed emphasis on tailoring interventions to national contexts, amplifying community-led solutions, and working more closely with actors in under-represented regions.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to driving our strategic agenda with greater focus and innovation. We aim to deepen our research and policy engagement in emerging areas such as digital economy governance and AI regulation, while sustaining efforts in traditional areas like internet freedom, digital inclusion, and civic participation.

As we share the milestones and insights captured in this report, we extend deep gratitude to our partners, funders, and collaborators whose trust and support make our work possible. Most importantly, we salute the individuals, organisations, and networks across Africa and beyond who continue to raise their voices, build innovative solutions, and hold power to account in the digital age.

Together, we remain committed to shaping a future where technology enables dignity, equality, and freedom for all.

The CIPESA Team

Africa's Digital Rights Landscape

In a year marked by a global push for digital inclusion and democratic renewal, CIPESA has remained committed to its mission of promoting inclusive and effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Africa for improved governance and livelihoods. Our 2024 journey has been driven by a steadfast commitment to promoting the inclusive and effective use of ICT for governance and livelihoods. Anchored in our Strategic Plan, we recognise that the rapid evolution of technology continues to present new challenges to Africa's digital transformation and its pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under Agenda 2030.

Across Africa, digital rights remain at a crossroads. While technology continues to unlock new avenues for civic engagement, economic participation, and governance, it is equally being weaponised to suppress freedoms, limit access to information, and entrench state control. The past year has seen both progress and regression in different countries, reflecting a complex and evolving digital landscape.

Dubbed the "Year of Democracy", 2024 saw numerous African countries go to the polls, with technology playing a central role in electoral processes. Digital tools enabled voter education, registration, and mobilisation, and amplified citizen participation. However, the same platforms were also exploited to spread disinformation, manipulate public opinion, and enable state-sponsored surveillance.

In countries such as the Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Mauritania, Mozambique, and Sudan, authorities resorted to internet shutdowns and network disruptions to curtail information flow, silence dissent, and manipulate electoral outcomes. These disruptions not only undermined democratic processes but also dealt economic blows to digital-dependent sectors. Meanwhile, Botswana, Rwanda, and Namibia navigated their digital and election spaces without internet disruptions, providing a contrast to the increasing trend of information blackouts during electoral periods.

Freedom of expression remains under siege in many African countries, with governments enacting restrictive laws and leveraging digital surveillance to stifle critical voices. Journalists, bloggers, and activists continue to face arrests, intimidation, and cyber harassment for their online expression.

Laws such as Tanzania's Cybercrimes Act, Uganda's Computer Misuse Act, and Nigeria's Social Media Bill have been used to criminalise online speech, while countries like Ethiopia and Zimbabwe have increasingly employed cyber-monitoring to track and suppress dissent. The role of Big Tech in content moderation has also come under scrutiny, with platforms accused of bias, arbitrary takedowns, and failing to protect marginalised voices.

Similarly, the use of spyware and surveillance technology is on the rise, with states investing heavily in digital monitoring tools. Governments in countries like Rwanda, Togo, Egypt, and Ethiopia have been implicated in deploying spyware against opposition figures, activists, and journalists, raising serious concerns about the violation of privacy rights.

Legislative moves toward data localisation, such as those in Kenya and South Africa, have sparked debates on whether they genuinely serve national security interests or provide governments with more undue control over user data. The lack of robust data protection frameworks in many African states leaves users vulnerable to surveillance, data breaches, and corporate exploitation.

Despite commitments to digital inclusion, many Africans remain disconnected due to high internet costs, limited infrastructure, and exclusionary policies. Rural communities, women, and persons with disabilities continue to face barriers to digital access, exacerbating social and economic inequalities.

Efforts by civil society to push for universal, affordable, and inclusive internet access have yielded some progress. Countries such as Ghana and Kenya have implemented policies aimed at reducing internet costs, while regional initiatives like the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy seek to bridge the digital divide. However, affordability remains a major challenge, with the cost of data in Africa among the highest globally.

The role of the private sector in shaping Africa's digital rights landscape is becoming more evident. Telecommunications companies have been complicit in internet shutdowns and data privacy violations, often acting under state directives. Meanwhile, financial technology and AI-driven services present new ethical concerns regarding data exploitation, discrimination, and algorithmic bias.

Increasingly, civil society organisations are advocating for corporate accountability in the digital space, pushing for stronger data protection regulations, ethical Artificial Intelligence (AI) deployment, and greater transparency from tech companies. Uganda, Nigeria, and South Africa have witnessed growing calls for businesses to integrate human rights considerations into their digital policies and operations. Amidst these challenges, CIPESA has remained at the forefront of advocating for digital rights across Africa, through our Research and Documentation, Knowledge and Skills Development, Policy Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement, and Movement Building and Strategic Alliances.

We have expanded our footprint by deepening our understanding of civil society's digital resilience needs, enhancing digital rights among diverse stakeholders, and strengthening the link between digital rights and business rights. These initiatives set the stage for broader regional replication, reinforcing our commitment to a digitally inclusive and rights-respecting Africa. As the landscape continues to evolve, CIPESA remains committed to ensuring that digital transformation in Africa is underpinned by rights, freedoms, and inclusivity.

2024 in Review

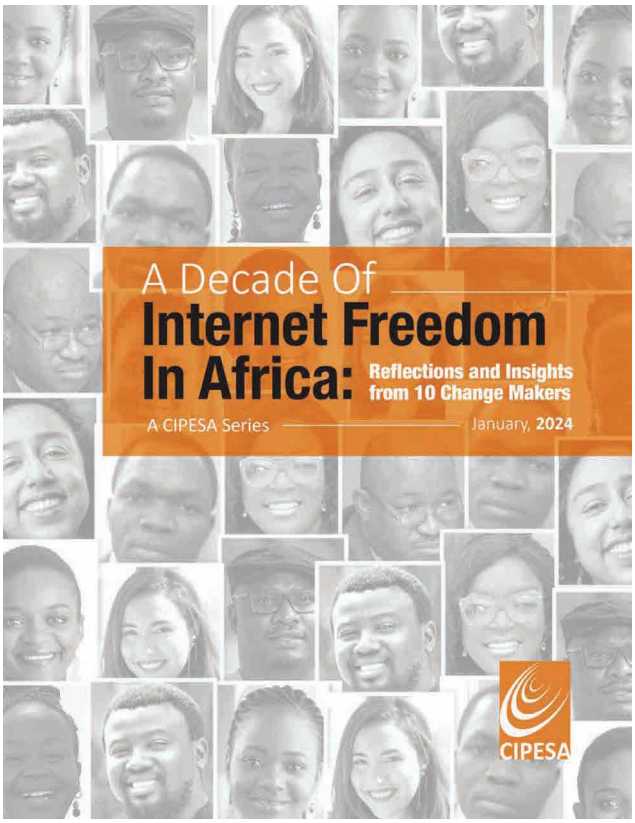
In 2024, CIPESA's work continued to be guided by the vision and priorities in our 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, which centres on fostering an inclusive, open, and rights-based digital ecosystem in Africa. As digital technologies continued to shape governance, livelihoods, and civic engagement across the continent, we remained focused on our core programming areas: civic participation, internet freedom and governance, data governance, the digital economy, digital resilience, and digital inclusion. Throughout the year, we translated our strategic ambitions into action - responding to emerging challenges, influencing policy, and equipping diverse actors with the tools and knowledge to navigate and shape Africa's digital future. Below are highlights of our performance:

Advancing ICT Policy Through Evidence-Based Research

Staying true to its mission, CIPESA continued to harness research as a catalyst for advocacy and action. Issues explored included elections and technology, tech accountability, the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), health data regulation, foreign influence on digital repression in Africa, biometrics and digital identity.

A Decade of Internet Freedom in Africa Report

In January, we launched the Decade of Internet Freedom in Africa Report, which documents reflections and insights from 10 collaborators who have been instrumental in shaping Africa's digital and internet freedom advocacy landscape over the last 10 years. These changemakers have demonstrated change by advocating for a more free, secure, and open internet in Africa and working to ensure that no one is left behind. The launch of the report was accompanied by a webinar addressed by the change makers.



State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2024

In the so-called Year of Democracy, when at least 20 African countries were scheduled to go to the polls, the 11th edition of the *State of Internet Freedom in Africa* Report explored the intersection of technology and elections across the continent. The rapid rise in internet and mobile penetration, alongside expanded digitalisation efforts including the adoption of biometric voter registration and verification systems, initially signaled a promising shift toward more transparent, efficient, and accessible electoral processes. However, while technology has played a transformative role in elections, the report highlights its double-edged nature. In many instances, authoritarian governments have selectively deployed digital tools to entrench power, undermining the very democratic principles that technology was expected to enhance.



Countering Disinformation in Africa

A Tapestry of Actors, Attitudes, and Impact: *Countering Disinformation in Africa:* Disinformation is an escalating challenge across Africa, threatening democratic processes, social cohesion, and undermining trust in the media. However, evidence of the successes and pitfalls of initiatives that are working to counter disinformation remains minimal.

This report by CIPESA, in collaboration with Bertelsmann Stiftung, examines the evolving landscape of disinformation in Africa, highlighting key protagonists involved in the pushback against it and the tactics they employ, as well as the challenges. It offers recommendations for a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach to tackling the vice. The report includes case studies on the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa.

Protecting & Promoting Digital Rights in Africa: A Toolkit for National Human Rights Institutions

Recognising the need to strengthen the institutional capacities of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), we partnered with the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and Paradigm Initiative to develop the *Digital Rights Toolkit for NHRIs*. The Toolkit equips NHRIs with the knowledge, tools, and strategies they need to effectively address these challenges while also emphasising the intersection of human rights with digital technologies. It also provides actionable insights to promote accountability, transparency, and inclusivity in digital governance.

A separate collaboration, between CIPESA, USAID, East West Management Institute (EWMI), ICNL and a number of local CSOs, resulted in the publication, The *State of Access to Digital Tools, Usage of ICT and Digital Threats to CSOs in Uganda: A Baseline Study.* The report documents the findings of a baseline study on access to and use of digital tools by CSOs and activists in the country. It explores these actors' capacity to use digital tools in response to emerging digital threats while engaging in human rights advocacy, collaboration and accountability initiatives. Ultimately, the report casts light on the various forms of digital threats that CSOs face, the effectiveness of the approaches that they adopt to mitigate these threats, as well as the status of access to digital security tools.

Electoral Disinformation and Foreign Malign Influence

A research titled *Foreign Influence on Civic Space in Uganda - Implications for Digital Rights* illuminates how China and its model of governance and state surveillance may be influencing or inspiring retrogressive laws and undermining digital rights in Uganda. It seeks to inform awareness-raising and advocacy engagements with legislators, civil society organisations, HRDs, and journalists. It also offers insights into the possible legal reforms necessary to advance digital rights in the country.

Other election-specific research included one that looked at the case of South Africa - *Disinformation and Electoral Integrity in South Africa's 2024 Polls: State of Play and Future Directions.* It examined the threats to electoral integrity in the country's general election, focusing on the proliferation of disinformation and misinformation campaigns across various social media platforms. The analysis highlighted existing socio-political fault lines such as inequality and xenophobia, which were being exploited in online spaces to manipulate public opinion, such as through deepfakes, doctored images, and false narratives targeting key figures. The report concluded with recommendations for increased vigilance and collaboration to safeguard the election's integrity.

Which Way for Artificial Intelligence in Africa?

In the policy brief, *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Data Protection and Privacy: A Walk-through Rights of a Data Subject in Africa*, we document the absence of specific laws on AI in Africa. Efforts that exist, such as in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius and Rwanda, are merely policies or strategic plans. We point out that data protection legislation provisions, such as those that bar automated decision-making, relate to the use of AI and it is therefore important to explore the impact of AI on data protection and privacy and how African governments could prepare to deal with AI to check data and privacy breaches.

Also on AI, we produced *An Artificial Intelligence Eco-System for Uganda policy brief*, which highlights the prospects for AI regulation in the country and suggests policy measures that should be considered to ensure proper adoption, maximisation and use of AI while mitigating its risks. In a similar think-piece, *Towards a Regulatory Framework for Ethical Artificial Intelligence in South Africa,* we observe that although South Africa seems well-positioned to be a fore-runner in AI deployment, given its advanced tech sector, the delay in crafting a coherent strategic, legal and regulatory framework for the country could hamper its digital transformation ambitions. South Africa therefore urgently needed to develop both an AI strategy and a regulatory framework in order to keep up with AI deployment in the country if it hoped to remain competitive.

Analysing New Laws

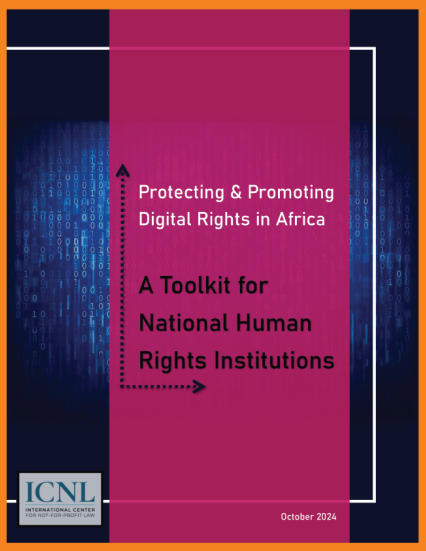
In another policy brief, we asked the question, *"What Does Kenya's Digital Health Act Portend for Data Governance and Regulation?"* We concluded that Kenya's Digital Health Act, which was enacted at the end of 2023, is a progressive move towards appropriate regulation of digital health services in Kenya. The Act has a clear thread of provisions which are fundamentally inclined towards rights-respecting data governance in the health sector, alongside support for research and innovation. Health data is highly sensitive and e-health and e-health data management are in nascent stages in the country. Proactive education of service providers and citizens, as well as robust enforcement of the Act, will be critical in enabling the new law to engender effective data governance and improved health services delivery.

At the close of the year, alongside the Bloggers of Zambia, *we analysed the Zambia Cyber Security Bill, 2024 and the Cyber Crimes Bill, 2024.* The proposed laws' objective of combating cyber crimes and promoting a safe and healthy digital society was a welcome move, as was the need for the country to strengthen its cyber security posture, including through legislation. However, the draft laws missed the opportunity to cure some of the deficiencies in the 2021 cyber crimes law and instead introduced several, more regressive provisions. The analysis pinpointed the retrogressive and vague provisions in the two Bills, and offered recommendations that could render the proposed laws more robustly rights-respecting and effective in combating cyber crimes.

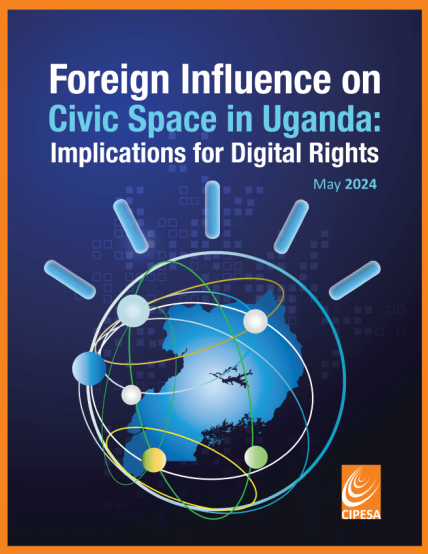
Biometrics and Digital Rights

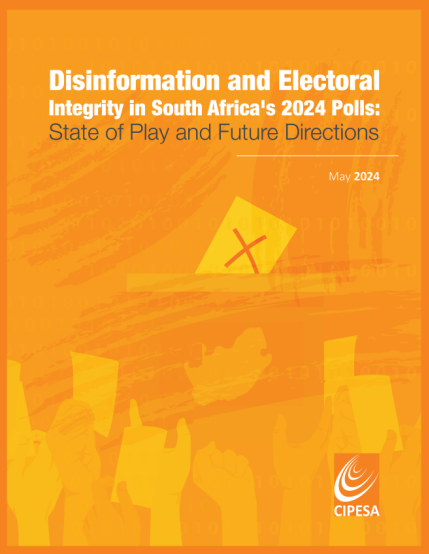
Biometrics and Digital Identity in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities and Policy Options examines the burgeoning use of biometric digital identification (BDI) in Africa, highlighting interactions between technological advancement, national development goals, and citizens' rights. The policy brief explored the drivers of BDI adoption, including improved service delivery, regional integration, and technological progress (like mobile biometrics and AI). However, it also critically assessed the significant challenges, such as weak data protection laws, risks of state surveillance, and the potential for exclusion of vulnerable populations. The brief proposed policy options to maximise the benefits of BDI while safeguarding fundamental rights, focusing on strengthening legal frameworks, promoting public awareness, and building capacity in data protection.

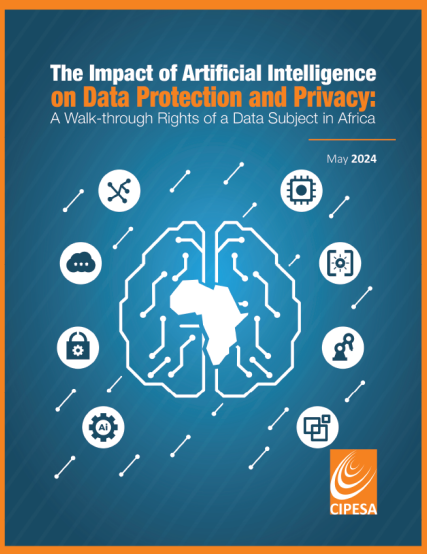

State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2024
Africa's Electoral
Democracy and Technology:
Pitfalls and Promises
September 2024
CIPESA


Protecting & Promoting
Digital Rights in Africa
A Toolkit for
National Human
Rights Institutions
ICNL
October 2024

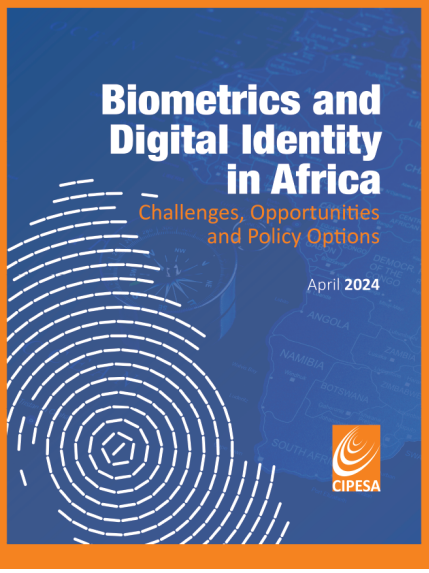

USAID
ICNL
EAST-WEST MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
The State of Access to Digital Tools, Usage of ICT and Digital Threats to CSOs in Uganda:
A Baseline Study
SEPTEMBER 2024


Foreign Influence on
Civic Space in Uganda:
Implications for Digital Rights
May 2024
CIPESA


Disinformation and Electoral
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Policy Brief
What Does Kenya's Digital Health Act Portend for Data Governance and Regulation?
April 2024
CIPESA


Biometrics and Digital Identity in Africa
Challenges, Opportunities and Policy Options
April 2024
CIPESA


Analysis of the Zambia Cyber Crimes Bill, 2024 and Cyber Security Bill, 2024
December 2024
Progressive Provisions

Knowledge and Skills Development

CIPESA conducted a diverse range of training activities aimed at equipping our diverse stakeholders with the skills and knowledge to navigate and address current and emerging digital rights challenges across Africa. These capacity building efforts targeted policymakers, journalists, civil society organisations, and grassroots communities, with the goal of expanding the pool of informed and empowered #InternetFreedomAfrica advocates for digital inclusion, privacy, and freedom of expression - a community we have grown over the years. Below are highlights of the trainings held:

Platform Accountability

On February 8, 2024, CIPESA and AfricTivistes convened a workshop on platform accountability and content moderation in Dakar, Senegal. The workshop examined the effectiveness of content moderation policies and explored opportunities for stakeholder collaboration to safeguard internet freedom in that country. The February 2024 postponement of Senegal's presidential elections led to heightened political tensions, prompting the government to suspend mobile internet access on multiple occasions. The Ministry of Communication justified the shutdowns by citing the spread of "subversive hate messages" on social media that allegedly incited violence. These restrictions marked the third instance of network disruptions in the country, continuing a trend of digital clampdowns witnessed in previous years. For details, see: *Senegal Elections: CIPESA and AfricTivistes Engage Key Stakeholders on Content Moderation*

Building Civic Actors' Advocacy Skills

As part of efforts to strengthen digital rights advocacy in Africa, CIPESA trained CSOs from Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe on digital rights advocacy and campaigning. Held in Dakar, Senegal, the training covered tech accountability, campaign strategies, impact communications, and media relations, with experience-sharing sessions from the Global Network Initiative (GNI) and Senegal's Personal Data Protection Commission (CDP). Participants included African partners of the Global Internet Freedom (GIF) programme, who were driving stakeholder engagements on digital identity and data protection. As a Regional Partner for GIF, CIPESA's role was to coordinate activity implementation by the local partners, support learning and exchange among the partners, and network-building through #FIFAfrica. See more here *CIPESA Trains CSOs on Digital Rights Advocacy and Campaigning in Africa*

"Existing research, such as that by Ranking Digital Rights and CIPESA's annual report on the State of Internet Freedom in Africa, are critical resources that support evidence-based advocacy with governments and telecom companies"

Apolo Kakaire, Communication and Advocacy Manager at ACME, Uganda.

Emphasising the value of strategic alliances, "We have relationships with some of the telecom companies you [CSOs] are likely to engage and pledge support for outreach to their global and national offices as needed" - Montserrat Legorreta, GNI's Program and Operations Associate.

Tackling Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

Around the International Women's Day 2024, celebrated under the theme #InspireInclusion, CIPESA undertook several initiatives to enhance the safety and inclusion of women in digital spaces. We hosted a *webinar* on how African women in politics are pushing back against gender-based violence online. It featured parliamentarians from Malawi, Namibia and Tanzania and urged Governments to adopt specific policies addressing tech-facilitated violence against women in politics.

In partnership with UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), we focused on advancing media development efforts to promote journalists' safety, gender inclusion, and press freedom. As part of Women's Month, CIPESA hosted workshops and Digital Security Cafes in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda. See *The Pursuit for Digital Security among Women Journalists in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda.*



A panel Discussion during a workshop on Digital Security among Women Journalists, Kampala, Uganda

Capacitating National Human Rights Institutions to Promote Digital Rights

To strengthen the capacity of African National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in monitoring, protecting, and promoting digital freedoms, CIPESA conducted a two-day *training* on June 25-26, 2024, in Nairobi, Kenya, bringing together NHRI representatives from Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. The training, attended by over 30 participants, aimed to equip NHRIs with the knowledge and tools to address digital rights challenges, advocate for enabling laws, and engage with key stakeholders, including security agencies, policymakers, and tech companies.

Speakers highlighted the growing threats to digital rights, the limited expertise within NHRIs, and the need for stronger advocacy and collaboration. Practical strategies discussed included leveraging international frameworks like the Rabat Plan of Action and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The training, facilitated by experts from CIPESA, Internews, ICNL, and the Kenya National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), underscored the critical role of NHRIs in shaping digital rights policies and protecting human rights in the digital age. See more here: *East and Southern African National Human Rights Commissions Trained in Digital Rights Protection.*



Some of the participants at a two-day capacity-building training July 30, 2024, Nairobi, Kenya.

Combating Hate Speech and Disinformation

In May 2024, CIPESA organised a fact-checking and ethical reporting workshop for 20 Ethiopian journalists in Addis Ababa to combat disinformation and hate speech, which had been a significant challenge in the country. The training equipped journalists with the most essential and current tools in the industry, allowing them to produce credible and trustworthy news and reports.

"The training added great value to the journalists because it covered several topics with practical exercises, from the basics of fact-checking to advanced fact-checking techniques. The participants gained insights into the motivations behind the sharing of disinformation, the actors responsible, and the tactics employed by them. Furthermore, the training highlighted prevalent disinformation trends in Ethiopia and provided participants with online tools and techniques to effectively combat disinformation."

Kirubel Tesfaye, fact-checking trainer.

See more here: Counting the Benefits of Fact-Checking Training for Ethiopian Journalists.

In June 2024, the NCIC and CIPESA trained 60 journalists in Naivasha, Kenya, to address digital harms such as hate speech and disinformation. The training, held amid the #RejectTheFinanceBill2024 protests, aimed to equip journalists from Nakuru County - a conflict hotspot - with skills in ethical reporting, fact-checking, and conflict-sensitive journalism. Experts from NCIC, CIPESA, and the Media Council of Kenya emphasised balancing freedom of expression with mitigating online harms, the role of journalists in fostering peace, and the need for stronger digital hate speech regulations. Participants discussed challenges like high verification costs and low digital literacy, reinforcing the urgency of ethical journalism in Kenya's evolving digital landscape. See more: *Kenyan Journalists Trained on Digital Rights and Addressing Online Harms.*

In preparation for Cameroon's 2025 presidential elections, CIPESA and ADISI-Cameroun organised a two-day workshop in Yaoundé, Cameroon to train key stakeholders on combating disinformation, safeguarding electoral integrity, and promoting democratic practices online. Attended by media professionals, researchers, and civil society actors, the training addressed the rising threat of disinformation, its political and ethnic dimensions, and foreign influence in shaping public opinion. Participants engaged in masterclasses on fact-checking and media literacy, equipping them with critical skills to counter disinformation.

The workshop culminated in key recommendations, including legal reforms, enhanced media literacy, support for independent journalism, and digital platform accountability, alongside the adoption of the *"Yaoundé Declaration on Electoral Disinformation"* to guide future interventions. See more below: *Cameroon's 2025 Presidential Election: Equipping Actors to Address Disinformation*.

On the margins of the 3rd Africa Media Convention in Ghana, CIPESA conducted a Media Training on AI and Elections, targeting media actors from Ghana, Zimbabwe, Togo, South Sudan, DR Congo and Uganda. The deliberations from the training fed into a panel on AI and the media during the main proceedings of the convention.

Ramping Up Civil Society's Digital Resilience

In recognition of the importance of data security and cyber resilience, CIPESA conducted an assessment of the cybersecurity readiness of a dozen CSOs in Uganda, including partners in the Your Rights Activity supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which CIPESA led. The assessment aimed to identify potential vulnerabilities and areas for strengthening the digital security measures and operational practices of the CSOs against digital threats. The assessment revealed significant vulnerabilities: Over 80% of the surveyed organisations underestimated cybersecurity risks and did not have formal processes to identify and prioritise vulnerabilities. Moreover, about 90% of the organisations lacked any form of incident response plan or designated team to handle digital incidents.

As a result of the digital security assessments, seven organisations were equipped with infrastructure aimed at strengthening their cybersecurity. This included 11 softwares, three desktops, two phones, two tablets, seven cloud storage spaces and three laptops. This activity aimed to create a safer and more secure operational environment for CSOs in the democracy, rights, and governance sector.

Still in Uganda, we assessed the communication and advocacy needs of CSOs in the democracy, rights and governance space, and went on to implement a capacity enhancement programme for 15 CSOs.

Policy Advocacy and StakeholderEngagement

During the year, CIPESA held various stakeholder engagements that involved thousands of stakeholders across Africa and beyond. They ranged from FIFAfrica to shaping multistakeholder internet governance, and engaging private sector actors, policymakers, and legislators on issues such as media freedom, data governance, internet disruptions, and inclusive digital policies.

The Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica)

Most of CIPESA's research, policy and advocacy efforts culminate in the annual FIFAfrica, which has since 2014 served as a pivotal platform to showcase not only our work but that of the extended #InternetFreedomAfrica community. FIFAfrica has become a pivotal avenue for policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement due to its unique convening power and its ability to connect stakeholders, fuel collaborations, and contribute towards advancing digital rights related policy reforms.



A panel in one of the Session at FIFAfrica24 Dakar, Senegal.

FIFAfrica24 Statistics

554 participants
In-Person Attendance

Virtual Participation
1,000
Online Attendees



150 **Travel Support** beneficiaries

171
Speakers

55
Sessions

10
Exhibitors

English, French, and Sign Language
Language

Two days
multilingual

Digital security help desk

The 2024 edition of the Forum offered participants direct engagement with decision-makers and leaders from various stakeholder groups - living up to the demands of the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance. The diverse range of policy dialogues, roundtables, and workshops where pressing issues such as surveillance, internet shutdowns, content moderation, data protection and governance, and digital inclusion were debated, served to translate dialogue into actionable commitments and frameworks that inform national, regional, and international policy-making. See more about FIFAfrica *here*.



Participants mingle at FIFAfrica24 Dakar, Senegal.

"I extend my heartfelt thanks to CIPESA for the opportunity to be part of #FIFAfrica in Dakar, Senegal. Words cannot fully express my appreciation for this enriching experience. The discussions, especially on digital accessibility and inclusion, have sparked important research ideas that I believe can drive meaningful change. Moving forward, I see opportunities to explore research on affordable access to digital content, enhancing ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, and making digital policies more inclusive. I look forward to continued collaboration to turn these ideas into impactful action."

Dr. Abdul Busuulwa

"The Pan-African Feminist Dreamspace at #FIFAfrica24 was a powerful moment of collective visioning, where African women and gender-marginalised groups reimagined the future of work beyond exploitation and inequality. By centering decolonial, feminist, and Pan-African perspectives, we challenged dominant narratives and forged new pathways for justice in the digital economy. This space was more than a conversation - it was a commitment to transformative change, solidarity, and the creation of a more equitable digital future for all workers."

Nawi Afrifem Collective

Advocacy Against Internet Shutdowns at the African Commission and Beyond

CIPESA participated in the 81st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), from October 16-23, 2024, in Gambia. The engagements represented an opportunity to advocate for the protection of digital rights and the importance of maintaining open and free digital spaces.

One of the highlights was a side event *organised by CIPESA* on "Internet Shutdowns and Elections in Africa." The event highlighted the severe impacts of internet shutdowns on democratic processes, particularly during elections, where shutdowns and disruptions often interfere with access to information and free expression which are vital to ensuring a fair and transparent process. The side event attracted 44 participants.

In March 2024, the ACHPR adopted Resolution 580, urging African states to refrain from imposing internet shutdowns, particularly during electoral periods. However, internet shutdowns continue to be experienced across the continent. During 2024, CIPESA actively worked with other rights advocates to condemn these network disruptions. In *June* (and again in *November*), we, together with KICTANet and others, challenged the Kenyan government's blockage of social media. Also, as part of the **#KeepItOn movement** led by AccessNow, CIPESA added support to numerous calls to governments to always uphold the right to access information and freedom of expression, including during times of elections and public protests.

Engaging Policymakers on Media Freedom and Data Governance

CIPESA participated in consultative meetings with Uganda's Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) and National Guidance, including to validate a draft National Data Governance strategy, which marked a significant milestone in the country's digital transformation journey. In these meetings, CIPESA provided input to the draft National Data Governance Strategy which was developed with the support from the United Nations Global Pulse Uganda and the United Nations Development Programme. The strategy serves as a cornerstone of the Uganda Digital Transformation Road Map, which drives the Digital Uganda Vision and the country's broader Digital Revolution agenda.

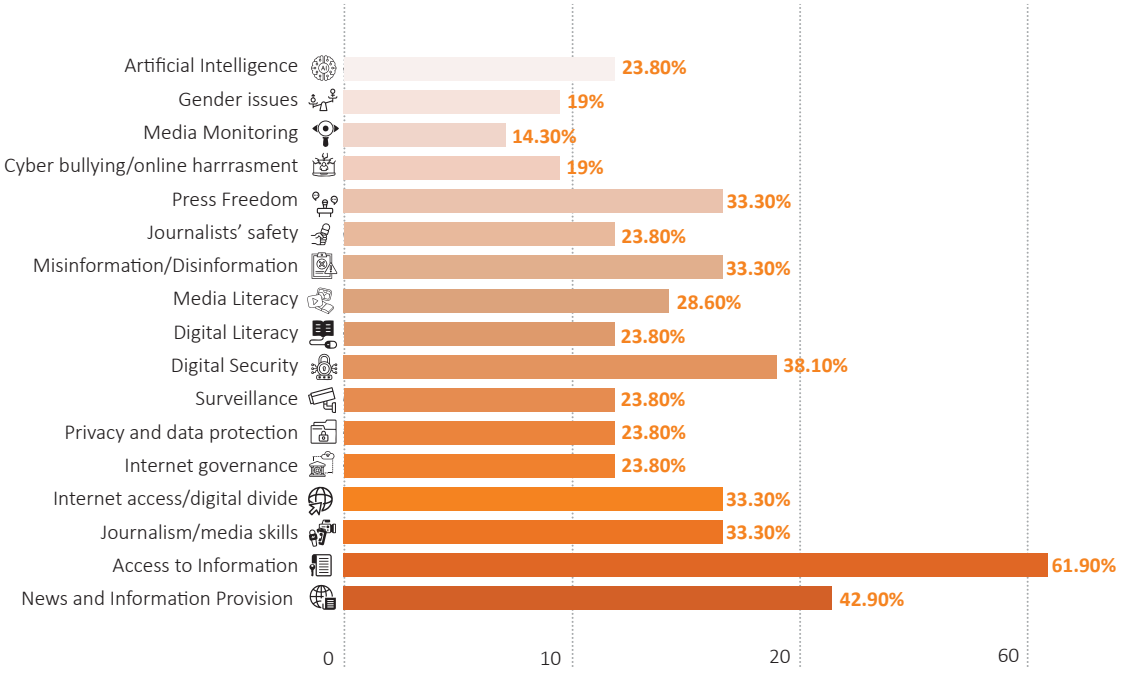
Separately, CIPESA developed and submitted a position paper to the Ministry ICT, that emphasised the need to protect media freedom, media independence and the right to hold power accountable while pursuing national development. Subsequent to this submission, CIPESA was invited by the Ministry to participate in a consultative dialogue that brought together media leaders, editors, key policymakers, and implementers. The theme of the dialogue was "Media that Works for Uganda in a Global Setting."

Building Bridges with Legislators to Advance Progressive Digital Policies

On September 19, 2024, CIPESA held a meeting in collaboration with ACME aimed at raising awareness on the state of digital rights in Uganda, and to map out key advocacy areas for further engagement. The meeting was attended by 31 individuals including 22 CSOs, four journalists, five Members of Parliament, and one representative from the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC). The meeting recommended the need to develop a position paper to guide legislators, particularly those in the ICT committee, in advancing the conversation on digital rights in parliament.

A survey was conducted among the participants to identify key priority areas for advocacy and consequently rank the focus areas for advocacy. The top three areas were: Access to Information (61.9%), News and Information Provision (42.9%) and Digital Security (38%). These results will be used for collective advocacy with state and non-state actors. Below is a summary of the of the survey:

Earlier in August 2024, CIPESA convened a meeting with Uganda's MPs, representatives of civil society, and the private sector to discuss *laws that impact the digital civic space.* In particular, the meeting discussed how the country's digital laws can be more supportive of human rights. Discussions focused on the Computer Misuse Act 2011, the Anti-Terrorism Act 2002, the Penal Code (Amendment) Act 2007, the Uganda Communications Act 2013, and the Regulation of Interception of Communications Act (RICA). These laws have been widely criticised for their ambiguous and broad provisions that prioritise control as opposed to protection of rights. The laws have also been used to target political dissidents and silence critical voices. The meeting was attended by 20 MPs, 11 parliamentary staff, as well as 16 civil society and private sector actors.



Top Priority Areas for Advocacy



A group photo at the inaugural UPIGF, September 2024

Shaping Multistakeholder Internet Governance

In Kenya, CIPESA supported the Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet) for the annual *Kenya Internet Governance Forum (KIGF)*. During KIGF, CIPESA *shared insights* on effective strategies and tools for combating online misinformation and disinformation. The session emphasised the importance of integrating efforts to push back against disinformation and misinformation into broader digital and media literacy initiatives so as to build a more informed and resilient online community. CIPESA also supported the East African Internet Governance Forum, as well as the *Uganda Internet Governance Forum* (UIGF), which featured the inaugural *Uganda Parliamentary Internet Governance Forum (UPIGF)* and a Youth Internet Governance Forum.

Other stakeholder engagement opportunities included

- Gave a keynote address on inclusive and participatory digitalisation at the Digital Summit Tanzania.
- Co-organised/participated in sessions on spyware, encryption, and digital accessibility for persons with disabilities at the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum 2024.
- Participated at Skoll World Forum where we presented on the future of work, tech accountability and disinformation
- At the Summit for Democracy, we spoke about future-proofing digital democracy amidst rising authoritarianism in Africa.
- Participated in the *ConnectCon*, an annual, closed event that brings together a network of technologists and digital security field operatives from across Southern Africa.
- Participated in a University of Warwick-organised stakeholder dialogue on scaling up of digital health regulation in Africa, featuring ministries, standards agencies and data protection authorities alongside civil society and the regional public health agency - the Africa Centre for Disease Control (CDC).
- Spoke at Bread and Net - the Middle East and North Africa regional digital rights event.
- Shared CIPESA's experiences on digital resilience that fed into user-research by *OpenUp*, in collaboration with the *Civic Tech Innovation Network* and *CIVICUS*, on Understanding Digital Needs for Civic Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Movement Building and Strategic Alliances

Collaboration and strategic alliances are at the heart of CIPESA's work. We have consistently prioritised these partnerships, harnessing collective expertise, resources, and networks to amplify digital rights concerns and drive impactful change. Below are highlights from the year:

The Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF):

In January 2024, we introduced the Tech Accountability Fund in partnership with Digital Action to support work on tech accountability in Sub-Saharan Africa, notably during the "Year of Democracy". A total of USD 134,000 was awarded to 10 initiatives, who were selected from 130 applications. The grant recipients implemented projects focused on AI, hate speech, disinformation, microtargeting, network disruptions, data access, and online violence against women journalists and politicians.

Earlier in January 2024, the ADRF issued *grants* to seven entities for work on addressing digital inclusion, women's safety online, cyber security and digital resilience. As at the end of 2024, the ADRF had awarded USD 834,000 since its inception.



Grantee Spotlight: *In the **2024 round**, the ADRF funded Thraets for work that produced **Community Fakes,** an incident database and central repository for researchers to submit, share, and analyse deepfakes and other AI-altered media. The platform enables collaboration, combining human insights with AI tools to create a robust defense against disinformation. By empowering users to identify, upload, and discuss suspect content, Community Fakes offers a comprehensive, adaptable approach to protecting the integrity of information. Further, Threats conducted research on elections in Tunisia and Ghana, with the findings feeding into tutorials for journalists and fact-checkers on identifying and countering AI-generated electoral disinformation and awareness campaigns on the need for transparency on the capabilities of AI tools and their risks to democracy.*

Established in 2019 as a rapid response and flexible funding mechanism, the ADRF aims to overcome the limitations of reach, skills, resources, and consistency in engagement faced by new and emerging initiatives working to defend and promote rights and innovation in the face of growing digital authoritarianism and threats to digital democracy in Africa. Past and present supporters of the ADRF include the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), the Ford Foundation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the German Society for International Cooperation Agency (GIZ), the Omidyar Network, the Hewlett Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Skoll Foundation and New Venture Fund (NVF).

Growing a Cadre of Digital Rights Public Interest Litigants

In July 2024, CIPESA conducted a one-day training of lawyers, aimed at building their understanding of digital rights issues, and to generate a wide pool of legal actors that support HRDs, activists and journalists while conducting their work. The lawyers committed to continuously offer legal support through litigation and research.

Relatedly, we conducted a case surgery on May 13, 2024, which focused on a constitutional petition filed by Human Rights Network for Journalists (HRNJ-U) and 13 others including CIPESA (Constitutional Petition No. 37 of 2022) against the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act, 2022. A total of 20 individuals representing 10 organisations participated in the litigation surgery. The surgery highlighted the need for more evidence to strengthen the case. Following a series of consultations, CIPESA in collaboration with the Network for Public Interest Lawyers (NETPIL) submitted a supplementary affidavit to the Court of Appeal.

Later in June 2024, we conducted a litigation surgery for 23 public interest lawyers, HRDs and activists to discuss the various strategies of pursuing public interest litigation on issues affecting a healthy information ecosystem and digital rights and generate support of key democracy actors for legal reform.

Project Showcase: Your Rights Activity

The Your Rights Activity, which was supported by USAID, made significant progress in promoting digital rights, enhancing media freedom, and supporting CSOs and HRDs in Uganda. Key achievements included participation in consultative meetings with the Ministry of ICT to shape the country's data governance strategy and media freedom landscape, as well as advocacy through litigation against restrictive digital laws, which included a case surgery on Constitutional Petition filed against the Computer Misuse Act.

The Activity conducted 10 social justice campaigns, 30 online engagement on X, 44 radio talk shows, successfully launched the Prefects TV show; held two human rights dialogues; completed a baseline study on journalism, human rights and freedom of expression; assessed digital advocacy skills of CSOs; audited the cybersecurity readiness of 18 CSOs; and conducted four digital security clinics to build the digital resilience of CSOs and HRDs. Additionally, capacity-building workshops for lawyers and journalists bolstered their understanding of digital rights, while media engagements raised public awareness of human rights issues. These activities contributed to a more favorable environment for digital and media rights in Uganda.

Key lessons learned include the importance of sustained collaboration between state and non-state actors to achieve impactful advocacy outcomes. Engaging stakeholders like policymakers and legislators proved crucial in shaping national strategies on digital rights. Media partnerships were instrumental in amplifying public awareness, highlighting the need for continuous capacity-building among journalists.

10 **Social Justice** campaigns

30 Online **Engagements** on X

44 **Radio talk shows**

The Prefects TV show successfully launched

Two Human rights dialogues held

completed a **Baseline study** on journalism, human rights and freedom of expression; assessed digital advocacy skills of CSOs;

Audited the cybersecurity readiness of **18** CSOs

Conducted **four** digital security clinics to build the digital resilience of CSOs and HRDs

Digital Rights Alliance Africa (DRAA)

In 2024, CIPESA deepened its partnership with the Digital Rights Alliance Africa (DRAA), a pan-African coalition of civil society actors, technologists, academics, and legal practitioners committed to promoting a free, open, and secure digital space across the continent. We jointly advanced regional conversations and action on key digital rights issues including internet shutdowns, surveillance, platform accountability, and the responsible governance of AI.

Highlights of the DRAA-CIPESA collaboration in 2024:



DRAA collaborated with CIPESA and NETPIL Uganda to develop a policy brief exploring the implications of AI on freedom of expression, privacy, and the right to association. The brief contributed to national and regional conversations on the ethical deployment of AI, particularly in contexts where civic space is shrinking.



Research under a partnership involving DRAA, CIPESA and ICNL produced a report documenting the impacts of internet disruptions in countries such as Ethiopia, Togo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Senegal, and provided critical recommendations to governments, regional blocs, and civil society on how to safeguard democratic participation in the digital age. The findings were shared at the 81st Ordinary session of the ACHPR in The Gambia.



Through the support of DRAA and partners such as Media Defence, CIPESA helped organise litigation surgeries to strengthen the legal capacity of digital rights defenders across East and West Africa. These sessions focused on strategic litigation, legal reform, and protective mechanisms for individuals and organisations targeted due to their online advocacy.



Through CIPESA's support, DRAA representatives participated in African Union-led consultations on data governance and cybersecurity, as well as civil society engagements on the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms. The Alliance also contributed to discussions around the protection of children in online spaces, highlighting the need for digital inclusion and protection in digital spaces, and produced a comprehensive report on the topic.

Driving the Data Governance Agenda

Several African governments have enacted laws that limit cross-border data flows, citing the need to protect national security, promote the local digital economy, and safeguard users' privacy. Building on the success of our previous work on data governance and engagement with the African Union Data Policy Framework (AUDPF), CIPESA continued with regional engagements as well as working with partners in Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, and Uganda, to build those partners' research capacity and to generate research evidence to promote cross-border data flows. An example of the research outputs is the report, *Can the AU Data Policy Framework (DPF) support Digital Trade in SACU?* It questions whether, in the context of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), its digital trade ambitions, and the complexities of international rules governing cross-border data flows and digital trade, the AUDPF can offer sufficient guidance.

As we argued, even with this promise and abundance of international and regional frameworks to guide the adoption and implementation of progressive national data governance frameworks, interventions would require the adoption and implementation of multiple and mutually reinforcing strategies such as (a) building research and advocacy capacity of digital rights and data rights actors; (b) undertaking research and policy analysis; and (c) engaging in national and regional policy processes on data governance regulation, particularly that related to cross-border data flows and harmonisation of data governance frameworks.

Meanwhile, in partnership with Niyel, we contributed to debates on the current *data governance policies and practices* in Africa which have continued to attract attention due to their inadequacy in ensuring the protection and respect for the rights of individual data subjects. A call was made to leverage new and emerging technologies to enhance the safety, security, accuracy, reliability and confidentiality of personal data.

Towards Health Data Governance

In partnership with Transform Health, we conducted legislative analysis on health data regulation in Cameroon, Senegal, and Zambia. The analysis reviewed existing legal frameworks and how they align with the principles and recommendations set forth in the *Model Law on Health Data Governance.* It formed the basis of stakeholder engagements in the three countries, to chart pathways to strengthening data rights in these countries' health sectors.

Advancing Respect for Human Rights by Businesses

In 2021, Uganda became the first African country to finalise a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAPBHR), based on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The sixth annual Symposium on Business and Human Rights in November 2024, which CIPESA co-organised, provided a platform for our engagement on *ethical and rights-respecting business practices* in the context of technology.

Engagements at the symposium kicked off a new project - Advancing Respect for Human Rights by Business in Uganda (ARBHR) - under which CIPESA, with support from Enabel, started work to strengthen advocacy and awareness of digital rights in the business sector, particularly those impacting women and children. In this regard, we issued a call for proposals for a *CSO Support Fund* for digital rights and business in Uganda. The fund will support up to six CSOs, alongside two innovation hubs, an employers' body and a business association.

In October 2024, CIPESA joined the first meeting of the Multi-Sectoral Technical Committee on Business and Human Rights, which supports the Uganda labour ministry's role of coordinating the National Action Plan and provides technical guidance on all business and human rights interventions. At that meeting, CIPESA made the case for mainstreaming digital rights in the implementation of the NAPBHR and urged stakeholders to leverage innovative technologies to improve the outcomes of the action plan.

Calls to Action to Promote Digital Rights

We joined the global community in commemorating Human Rights Day 2024 and reflected on the immense opportunities that the digital age brings for the realisation of human rights. Notably, we *issued a call to action* for African states to advance digital rights and protect digital civic space, and pinpointed the key intervention areas. Separately, CIPESA joined several CSOs and individuals in a joint brief on the United Nations Global Digital Compact (GDC). The signatories to the brief had actively engaged in the GDC process since its inception and expressed concerns regarding the state of the GDC from a human rights perspective.

For the tenth commemoration of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI), which was held on November 7, 2024, at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, *CIPESA hosted two sessions*, including a presentation and panel on the state of media freedom and journalists' safety in Africa. Additionally, CIPESA hosted the only Digital Security Booth at the commemoration, which served to address digital resilience concerns held by attendees.

On a related note, CIPESA is among eight *partners* of the European Union-supported Civil Society Alliances for Digital Empowerment (CADE) project, which was officially launched on May 31, 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. The CADE project, an ambitious initiative designed to empower CSOs to participate more actively in digital policy processes, is crucial in fostering inclusive and participatory democratic processes worldwide.

Tech and Disability Rights Advocacy

On the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, we reflected on *the impact of the African Union (AU) Disability Protocol and its Implication on digital rights for persons with disabilities* and called upon the African Commission to establish a Special Mandate to enhance the respect for and protection of the rights for persons with disabilities in Africa. The protocol came into force in May 2024 after securing the mandatory 15th ratification by the Republic of Congo. Under articles 23 and 24 of the protocol, States Parties should take "effective and appropriate measures" to facilitate the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of the right to freedom of expression and opinion and access to information, including through the use of ICT.

CIPESA has been a longstanding advocate for African governments to urgently ratify the protocol. However, CIPESA has also stated, including in submissions to the ACHPR, that ratifying the protocol would be a major but insufficient step in ensuring that persons with disabilities access and use digital technologies and that there is sufficient disaggregated data to inform programme interventions.

Meanwhile, in partnership with the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), Thomson Reuters Foundation (TRF), and ACME, we convened a capacity-building workshop in Senegal, for disability rights organisations and other digital rights advocates. The workshop equipped participants with the skills, knowledge, and tools necessary to advance digital rights for persons with disabilities.

The training was part of CIPESA's ongoing work on digital inclusion, particularly for persons with disabilities. The 21 workshop participants were drawn from Ethiopia, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Senegal, Uganda, and Zimbabwe and included lawyers, academics, journalists, media, regulators, civil society and disability rights organisations, and development partners.

Institutional Strengthening

Board Operations

The Board, as well as the three Board Committees (Finance, Programmes, and Human Resources), had a busy year, each meeting at least once every quarter to review budgets, work plans, strategies, and Management Reports. In line with the Board Work Plan for 2024 that prioritised - among others - the review and development of organisational policies, the year saw several policies being birthed or refreshed.

Amendments were made to the Finance Manual, the ICT Policy, the Consultancy Policy, and the Human Resource (HR) Manual. Revisions to the HR Manual resulted in the development and approval of the Salary Advance Policy, Remote Working Policy, and Provident Fund Policy. The Board also approved the Research and Publications Policy, the Whisteblower Policy, and the Audit Charter. For each of the policies approved by the Board, external consultants and internal experts trained all staff members to acclimatise them with these key institutional guides.

Also, 2024 saw an all-round assessment of the performance of the Board. This included an appraisal of the Board as a whole, the Board Chairperson, individual Board Members, Committees of the Board, and the Executive Director. Findings were discussed at a strategic planning meeting and an action plan was developed to implement the recommendations during 2025.

Board Gets New Member

Dr. Andrew Tarh, a seasoned finance professional with over 15 years of experience leading finance and business management in different industries across Europe, Africa, Canada, and the Middle East, was welcomed to the CIPESA Board. He holds a PhD in Management with a specialisation in Corporate Governance from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, an MBA in Financial Management from the University of Wales in Cardiff, United Kingdom and an Oxford Executive Post-Graduate Diploma in Financial Strategy from the Oxford University SAID Business School. He is a Chartered Accountant with accreditation in both the United Kingdom and Canada. Dr. Tarh currently serves as Director of Finance for Africa and Middle East for CTG (Committed to Good). Karibu sana!



Dr Andrew Ojong Tarh

Staff-Board Planning Retreat

This activity was held in line with Section 3.2 of the CIPESA Board Handbook, which provides for Joint Review and Planning Meetings to enable Board Members to appreciate the programmes and activities of the organisation and to build good relationships between Board Members and senior Management staff. The retreat was held in Mauritius and included all Board Members and eight staff members. It enabled a candid review of the organisation's operations and strategic thinking around augmenting operations, programming, financial resilience and institutional tenacity.

Ethics and Safeguarding Training

The Ethics and Safeguarding training was conducted by an external consultant for all Board Members and staff at a planning retreat. The training covered both Board Ethics and Organisational Ethics, as well as Safeguarding, an area on which CIPESA's Safeguarding Policy requires that both staff and Board Members should receive training. The activity also drew from the CIPESA Board of Directors Policies and Procedures Handbook, which provides for board orientation and ethics training.

"It is expected that through orientation, Board Members will agree collectively to subordinate their personal and individual egos and values and adapt, appreciate and improve on the existing culture, traditions, and norms of CIPESA."

The CIPESA Board Handbook (sect. 3.1.6).

As was articulated at the training, a strong ethical foundation fosters trust among stakeholders, protects the organisation's reputation, ensures long-term sustainability, facilitates effective decision-making, improves risk management, and increases employee engagement.

Staff Retreat

The secretariat's annual strategic retreat was held on January 15-17, 2025. In addition to planning for the year, the retreat featured exercises on the second iteration of the Organisation Mapping Tool (OMT) and risk assessment, as well as a staff training on Anti-Money Laundering led by an expert from the Financial Intelligence Authority.

The OMT assessed CIPESA on 13 areas: Programming, Learning and Evaluation, Advocacy, Field Engagement, External Communication, Governance, Finance Management, Fundraising and Donor Relations, Administration, Human Resource, Safety and security, Organisational Culture, and Network Leadership. The three areas that emerged as needing the most focus were External Communications, Fundraising and Donor Relations, and Human Resources. These focus areas have been included in the 2025 annual work plan for action.

Three New Staff Members @CIPESA

Three new staff members joined the team during 2024. Mr. Ben Ssempala Kimalanku joined as a Driver, bringing with him a long and clean driving record and a keen understanding of automotive mechanical issues. Ms. Patricia Ainembabazi joined as a Programme Officer, proudly bringing along extensive experience working in not-for-profit and for-profit organisations in various fields including International Human Rights Law, Development Finance, International Trade Policy, International Relations and Journalism. Lastly, Ms. Nadhifah Muhammad joined as Programme Officer, enthusiastically placing at CIPESA's benefit her nine years of working experience in programme management, corporate governance, and administration. She has previously worked with reputable NGOs including the Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET) and Uganda Women Lawyers Association (FIDA-Uganda) coordinating and implementing access to justice and human rights projects

Looking Ahead
to 2025

As Africa's digital landscape grows ever more complex, CIPESA enters 2025 with renewed resolve to champion digital rights, civic freedoms, and democratic resilience. Across the continent, digital technologies are being weaponised to stifle expression, shrink civic space, and entrench authoritarian control. Yet the digital evolution offers unprecedented opportunities to build open, inclusive societies. Guided by our 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, CIPESA will deepen its leadership in shaping a rights-based digital future — one anchored in evidence, innovation, and people power.

We will boldly expand our programming to confront emerging and persistent threats. Through cutting-edge research, strategic litigation, and agile advocacy, CIPESA will continue to drive policy reforms on privacy, freedom of expression, data governance, electoral integrity and digital democracy. Our work will grow to encompass new frontiers, including the ethical governance of artificial intelligence, safeguarding children's rights online, and strengthening digital accessibility for persons with disabilities. We will scale initiatives such as FIFAfrica and deepen our regional footprint by nurturing networks of civil society, media, and government actors committed to defending digital rights.

In an increasingly constrained donor environment, CIPESA is positioning itself for sustainability and strategic growth. We will vigorously implement our Fundraising Plan to diversify our resources, deepen trust with existing partners, and open new pathways for unrestricted and multi-year funding. Strategic partnerships with philanthropic institutions, technology companies, regional foundations, and innovative financing mechanisms will be at the heart of our efforts to build a resilient, adaptive organisation capable of responding to a rapidly changing civic and digital landscape.

Above all, CIPESA's commitment to building strong, rights-based digital ecosystems remains unwavering. We will invest in local leadership, strengthen civic resilience, and promote citizen agency across Africa. By centering our work on evidence, collaboration, and transformative advocacy, we envision a continent where technology empowers — and where digital freedoms are the cornerstone of democratic and inclusive societies. With bold ambition and collective action, CIPESA is ready to shape the next chapter for digital democracy in Africa.

CIPESA
Financials

*The CIPESA income for 2024 was **USD 5,937,168**. Our books of accounts are independently audited annually in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards.*

Supporters

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