



Statement: Digital Rights Alliance Africa

Protecting Civic Freedoms in times of Increasing Digital Authoritarianism

WINDHOEK, 24 September 2025: Representatives of the Digital Rights Alliance Africa (DRAA) – an alliance of civil society organisations (CSOs) from 13 countries¹ in Africa – met at a pre-event of the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FiFAfrica2025) in Windhoek, Namibia, on 23–24 September 2025. The aim of the meeting was to reflect on the progress and future of the digital civic space on the continent and strengthen the Alliance’s strategy to proactively contribute to digital rights and freedoms.

The DRAA’s strategic reflection occurs at a time of growing political polarization, escalating international conflicts, climate emergencies, and rapid digital and technological advances, largely implemented by a powerful technology sector that often acts with limited accountability.

Reflecting on the Alliance’s progress over the past two years, the members noted the following achievements:

- The membership started with 10 organizations and has more than doubled since 2023. All members have increased or improved their digital rights programming, with 87% of members able to develop new programme areas or improve the quality of their work since joining DRAA.
- The Alliance’s training programmes have been educative, empowering, and have helped members to gain knowledge and skills. For example, members in two countries initiated two legal cases focusing on facilitating internet access and ensuring data protection safeguards by telecommunication companies using new learning.
- DRAA has been a resourceful platform for sharing information and keeping abreast of legal and policy developments in Africa, including in digital democracy and access to the internet.
- DRAA has provided meaningful opportunities for collaboration and partnerships—uniting diverse organizations, academic institutions and experts across Africa, and has facilitated interdisciplinary cooperation, cross-country knowledge exchange and capacity building.

¹ Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The DRAA was established in 2023 to foster a favourable digital civic space for the exercise of rights and freedoms for CSOs in Africa.



For example, the Alliance has drawn attention to and challenged government-ordered internet shutdowns and social media restrictions, including in [Cameroon](#), Nigeria, [South Sudan](#) and Tanzania. Research and learning seminars have helped DRAA members to raise awareness nationally and with regional mechanisms about how the growing phenomenon of [digital surveillance](#) and the unregulated use of [artificial intelligence](#) constrain civil society.

- DRAA offers a strong gender lens on issues such as tech-facilitated gender-based violence and children's rights, so that they remain central to the digital rights agenda, such as its research on [child privacy protection online](#).

The Alliance developed a new three-year strategic plan to further its mission of serving as a platform to protect, promote and defend digital rights and civic space through advocacy, monitoring, research and strategic litigation.

The DRAA will primarily focus on the following issues:

- (i) Meaningful access to the internet;
- (ii) Invasive digital surveillance and its impact on civic freedoms online and offline;
- (iii) Regulation of personal data protection;
- (iv) Artificial Intelligence and its effective governance; and
- (v) Climate justice and technology.

The Alliance will seek to deepen engagement in these issues through:

1. Strengthening members' advocacy, awareness creation, and strategic litigation to advance digital rights in Africa by building capacity and supporting research, monitoring, and resource creation.
2. Collaborating to promote progressive frameworks on digital rights at local and regional levels.
3. Fostering civil society engagement on digital rights norm settings with multilateral bodies at regional and international levels and technical standards bodies through awareness raising, capacity building and networking with stakeholders.

Mindful of declining official development assistance, and the need to increase its sustainability, independence and effectiveness, the Alliance further resolved to jointly mobilize resources for the DRAA to advance the goals and objectives in its strategic plan.

By committing to this strategy and focus, the DRAA aims to achieve its vision of an Africa where digital rights are respected and protected.



Background

The Digital Rights Alliance Africa (DRAA or the Alliance) is a diverse pan-African coalition of formal civil society organisations (CSOs), human rights defenders (HRDs), media practitioners, lawyers and technology specialists in Africa that seek to champion digital civic space and counter threats to digital rights on the continent. The Alliance was jointly established in 2023 by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) to strengthen expertise and action by civil society in Africa to shape rights-based, enabling digital policies and counter threats to digital rights and internet freedoms across the continent. DRAA currently has members from 13 countries. Members undertake research, legal advocacy and share experiences to navigate digital restrictions and promote digital policy reforms in line with international norms.