KICTANet
The Power of Communities

Spotlight Report

Empowering Communities, Protecting Rights

July - September 2024

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INTRODUCTION

KICTANet is a think tank that brings together various stakeholders to discuss and influence information and communication technology (ICT) policy and regulation in Kenya. The think tank catalyses positive change in the ICT sector through four main activities: policy advocacy, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and research.

The network provides mechanisms and a framework for continuing cooperation and collaboration in ICT matters among industry, the technical community, academia, media, development partners, and government.

KICTANet's overall mission is to promote an enabling environment in the ICT sector that is robust, open, accessible, and rights-based through multistakeholderism. Its strategic objectives during 2022 - 2024 are practical multi-stakeholder participation, promoting an enabling environment, building capacities and empowered communities, and institutional strengthening. Our pillars are stakeholder engagement, capacity building, research, and policy advocacy.

In line with our strategic plan, KICTANet will continue to use its convening power through various mechanisms, tools, and multistakeholder approaches to promote an enabling environment in the ICT sector.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KICTANet's Q'3 2024 Digital Policy Landscape

In an era of rapid technological transformation, KICTANet emerged as a force driving strategic digital policy development across Kenya and the broader African region. In the quarter under review, our initiatives engaged in a range of initiatives focused on digital rights, data protection, and internet governance.. Strategic Highlights in the period:

- Multistakeholder Governance: Convening over 300 key actors from government, private sector, civil society, and academia to shape Kenya's digital future
- Capacity Development: Implementing the Kenya School of Internet Governance (KeSIG) to cultivate next-generation digital policy leaders

Critical Focus Areas:

a. Digital rights and privacy
b. Cybersecurity frameworks
c. Inclusive digital transformation
d. Women's digital empowerment

Transformative Impact

- Our programs strategically address emerging digital challenges through: Evidence-based policy advocacy.
- Collaborative policy dialogue
- Targeted training interventions
- Inclusive stakeholder engagement

By bridging knowledge gaps and fostering collaborative solutions, KICTANet continues to position Kenya at the forefront of progressive digital policy development.

Stakeholder Engagement

Kenya Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2024: Advancing Digital Policy and Engagement

The 17th edition of the Kenya Internet Governance Forum (KIGF) 2024 held on 1 August was a multi-stakeholder event that brought together 727 people, with 66% male and 34% female attendees participants from government, private sector, civil society, and academia to discuss digital ecosystem challenges and opportunities under the theme: *"Building Kenya's Multi-Stakeholder Digital Future".*

The forum centred on four global sub-themes: Harnessing digital innovation while managing risks; Enhancing digital contributions to development and sustainability; Advancing human rights and digital inclusion; and Improving digital governance frameworks. The event underscored Kenya's commitment to inclusive, transparent, and collaborative digital development, positioning the country as a leader in African internet governance discussions.

Mr. Ali Hussein, Chairman of KICTANet Board of Trustees, highlighted that the event was "more than just policy discussions" - it represented a crucial opportunity for Kenya to shape its digital future through a multistakeholder approach.
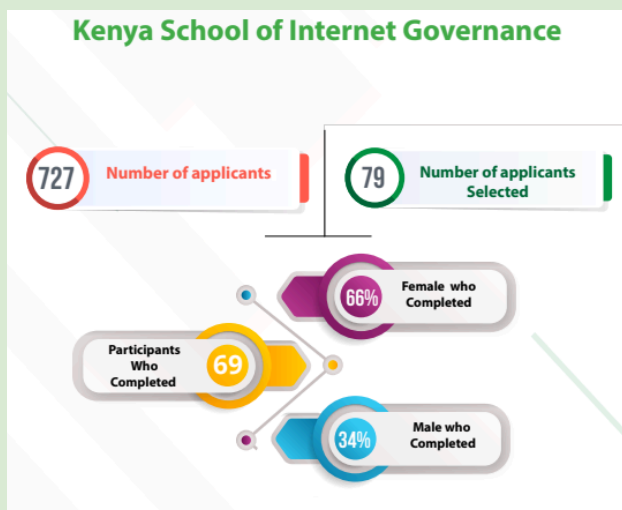
A section of the delegates during the East African Internet Governance Forum held in Kampala, Uganda.

As part of the broader East African Internet Governance Forum (EAIGF) that was held between 11-12 September, the Kenya IGF plays a vital role in fostering dialogue and driving positive change in the region's internet governance landscape. The rotational nature of these forums helps bring internet governance conversations to individual countries and strengthens regional integration efforts. In addition, it effectively contributed to shaping the global understanding of internet governance challenges and opportunities, ensuring that local perspectives are integrated into broader international discussions at the 19th annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF) held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from December 15–19, 2024.

The KIGF included several critical sub-events:

- **Kenya School of Internet Governance (KeSIG)**: The 9th KeSIG aimed to cultivate a critical mass of informed participants who can actively shape internet governance policies. By equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge, KeSIG empowers them to contribute meaningfully to ongoing discussions. Furthermore, the program fosters valuable networking opportunities within the internet governance community, facilitating connections between students, experienced practitioners, and other key stakeholders. This dynamic exchange allows for the sharing of knowledge and perspectives, enabling both experienced

Kenya School of Internet Governance

727 Number of applicants

79 Number of applicants Selected

66% Female who Completed

69 Participants Who Completed

34% Male who Completed

practitioners and emerging voices to learn from each other and adapt to the evolving landscape of internet governance.

- **Championing Women's Rights Online Using Feminist Internet Principles:** The Kenya Internet Governance Forum (KeIGF) opened with discussions on women's inclusion in digital spaces, where KICTANet and APC hosted a roundtable to promote Feminist Internet Principles (FIPs) and encourage participation in Internet governance. Speakers emphasized digital activism, literacy, social media's role in mobilization, government-imposed shutdowns, the integration of FIPs into the UN Global Digital Compact, stronger ICT laws, rights-based tech design, women's participation in STEM, affordable internet access, digital literacy, safe online spaces, and inclusive governance, all aimed at ensuring digital equality and privacy protection.

- **Privacy and Cybersecurity Roundtable:** In collaboration with the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC), we convened a roundtable to discuss cybersecurity and data protection challenges in Kenya. Key stakeholders gathered to analyse the effectiveness of the 2018 Computer Misuse and Cyber Crimes Act (CMC Act) and explore potential reforms. The discussion emphasised the need to balance robust cybersecurity measures with the protection of digital rights and freedoms. Participants highlighted the importance of:

  > **Modernising legal frameworks** to address emerging technologies and ensure compliance with data protection standards.
  > **Multi-stakeholder collaboration** to find common ground between national security needs and individual privacy concerns.
  > **Strong legal oversight** for the use of surveillance technologies, with established safeguards.
  > **Public awareness campaigns** to promote cybersecurity best practices.
  > **Responsible vulnerability disclosure programs** foster a collaborative cybersecurity ecosystem.

- **Kenya Youth IGF:** The 2024 Kenya Youth Internet Governance Forum (KYIGF) emerged as a critical platform for young leaders to shape the country's digital destiny. It was convened at the wake of the Gen-Z Protests, focusing on action, the forum aimed to bridge the gap between protest and progress, fostering a multi-stakeholder approach to building an inclusive and empowering digital landscape for all Kenyans. The KYIGF underscored the need for collaboration between government, youth, civil society, and the private sector to create a digital future that is inclusive, secure, and empowers positive change for all Kenyans.

A section of the Kenyan youth in a group photo during the Kenya Youth IGF held in Nairobi.

- **Civil Society Roundtable on Digital Rights:** Jointly with Katiba Institute, we equipped civil society organisations (CSOs) in Kenya with the knowledge and skills to comply with the country's Data Protection Act of 2019. By partnering with Katiba Institute, KICTANet leveraged its expertise in legal and policy frameworks to deliver a comprehensive and impactful training program for the Kenyan CSO sector.

KICTANet at the Global Disability Summit 2024

Participants at the global digital summit.

KICTANet participated in the Global Disability Convening at the Ford Foundation Centre for Social Justice. The Global Disability Summit brought together disability and non-disability organisations to build solidarity and advance disability rights. Key discussions centred around technology inclusivity, highlighting the need for user-centred design, accessible usability testing, and the implementation of existing accessibility laws. The summit also explored innovative funding strategies for disability advocacy, emphasising the importance of recognising diverse resources, fostering inclusion in decision-making, and adopting flexible funding models.

Capacity Building

Strengthening Digital Communities Project

Dr Paul Otuoma, Governor Busia County and the Deputy British High Commissioner, Dr. Ed Barnett during the launch of the strengthening Digital Communities Project for Busia and Mandera counties on September 23, 2024.

A key highlight of this quarter was the launch of the KES 390 million "Strengthening Digital Communities" project in Busia and Mandera counties. This ambitious initiative, funded by the UK Government's Digital Access Programme, aims to bridge the digital divide and empower marginalized communities.

Key Project Goals

- **Enhance Digital Literacy:** Equip 10,000 community digital champions with essential digital skills, enabling them to train 500,000 citizens, contributing to Kenya's target of 20 million digitally literate citizens by 2027.
- **Advanced Digital Skills:** Provide high-potential youth with advanced digital skills, mentorship, and entrepreneurial training to enhance their employability.
- **Inclusive Awareness Campaigns:** Raise awareness about digital inclusion for all, with a specific focus on reaching marginalised groups.
- **Improved Digital Access:** Collaborate with partners to enhance access to affordable internet, accessible devices, and digital platforms.
- **Develop Locally Relevant Digital Services**: Work with digital service providers to develop and

deliver locally relevant digital content and services, including government services.

- **Policy Guidance:** Generate research and policy briefs to inform systemic improvements and advocate for policy reforms that support digital inclusion.
- **AI and Emerging Tech Development:** Support the growth of Kenya's AI and emerging tech ecosystem by contributing to AI strategy, policies, and guidelines.

This project aligns with the UK Digital Development Strategy 2024-2030, Kenya's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), and the Government Transformational Digital Agenda (GoTDA). It will contribute significantly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Partners

[Harnessing Data and Technology for Policy Development in Africa.](#)

KICTANet participated in #DataFest24 by Pollicy in Nairobi (July 17-19), showcasing how it leverages convening power for inclusive policy development. Through multi-stakeholder dialogues, workshops, and policy briefs, the network drives evidence-based policymaking in Africa.

Stakeholder Engagement

We facilitated ICT engagements through collaborative initiative initiatives in the face - to - face Town Hall meetings, and in the KICTANet's interactive mailing list where stakeholders engage regularly on ICT policy issues.

Prioritising Data Security Alongside Tech Advancement

The release of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner's guidance note in December 2023 for the telecommunications sector spurred discussions on data privacy in Kenya. To discuss the implications, Article 19 Eastern Africa and KICTANet convened stakeholders on 5th June 2024.
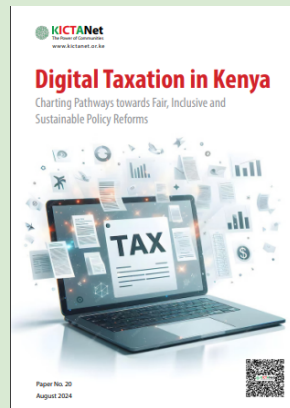
Furthermore, the discussion emphasised the importance of addressing the evolving landscape of data protection, including the rise of Artificial Intelligence and the need to assert extraterritorial powers to regulate data privacy for international platforms.

Key recommendations include fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, prioritising user education and informed consent, and ensuring clear and concise communication within data processing agreements. The engagement underscored the role of continued dialogue and collaboration in safeguarding data privacy in the digital age.

Research

Our policy advocacy and Capacity building are supported by evidence based research through an established working group on both current and emerging issues.

Digital taxation in Kenya Policy Paper No. 20 of August 2024, proposes five key recommendations for establishing a fair, inclusive, and sustainable digital taxation landscape in Kenya. These recommendations emphasise transparency in policymaking to build taxpayer trust, simplification of the digital tax framework to enhance efficiency and compliance, inclusive policymaking through a multistakeholder approach, a balanced approach that fosters innovation while ensuring fiscal sustainability, and ultimately, the promotion of fairness in the distribution of the digital tax burden.

To assess digitalisation and climate change in Kenya, Digitalisation and Climate Change: Connecting the two agendas for a just climate transition brief published August 2024, paints a broad picture of the state of play on matters of climate change and digitalisation; identifies areas of intersection or synergy; and proposes areas of work that civil society actors, such as KICTANet could explore.

Community networks in Kenya strive to bridge the digital divide but face challenges in ensuring accessibility for PWDs. The Best Practices for Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities In Kenyan Community Networks 2024 report identifies key barriers, including misconceptions, lack of assistive technologies, training limitations, financial constraints, and infrastructure challenges. To improve inclusion, the study recommends investing in accessibility features, involving PWDs in decision-making, providing training and support, and raising awareness.

Submissions

- [Press statement - Call for a response on the Internet Shutdown in Kenya in June 2024](): The government-imposed internet shutdown during the **#RejectFinanceBill2024** protests has been widely condemned by Kenyans as a blatant violation of free speech and access to information. This action directly contradicted prior assurances from the Communications Authority against such disruptions. On June 24th, 2024, we issued a statement urging the Kenyan government to refrain from implementing any internet shutdowns or information controls in response to the protests. Such measures not only infringe upon fundamental rights but also severely harm Kenya's economy and damage its international reputation.

- [KenSafeSpace: Statement on the Nationwide Internet Disruption in Kenya](): On June 25, 2024, the Kenyan government disrupted internet access nationwide, coinciding with protests against the Finance Bill 2024. This action directly contradicts a previous pledge by the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) to avoid internet shutdowns. As a result, on June 26th, a coalition of civil society organisations under the Kenya Safe and Inclusive Digital Space (KenSafeSpace) project strongly condemned this internet disruption.

- [A Call Against Internet Shutdowns in Kenya - June 2024 Joint Press Statement](): The hashtag #KeepItOn serves as a powerful call to action, urging the Kenyan government to refrain from shutting down the internet during the ongoing protests against the #RejectFinanceBill2024. Internet shutdowns are a grave violation of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, access to information, and the right to peaceful assembly. On June 24th, 2024, we issued a statement emphasising the need to uphold these fundamental rights and urging the Kenyan government to resist the temptation to impose internet shutdowns or any form of information control.

- [Memorandum on the draft Information and Communications Technology Authority Bill of June 2024](): The memorandum emphasises the need for a fair, transparent, and inclusive approach to ICT regulation and governance. By addressing potential conflicts of interest, reducing administrative burdens, and promoting competitive recruitment, the proposed changes aim to foster a more dynamic and equitable ICT sector in Kenya.

- [Joint Memorandum on the Assembly and Demonstrations Bill, 2024](): This memorandum, submitted by a coalition of Kenyan non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations with expertise in human rights and information and communications technologies (ICTs), addresses the Assembly and Demonstrations Bill, 2024. The bill, an Act of Parliament, seeks to give effect to Article 37 of the Constitution of Kenya, which guarantees the right to peaceful assembly and demonstration.

- [Joint Memorandum on The Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Rules 2024 & The Registration of Persons (Amendment) Rules 2024](): Our memorandum responds to the proposed amendments to the Births and Deaths Registration Rules 2024 and the Registration of Persons Rules 2024.