

# Spotlight Report

Collaborative Action for a Safer, More Inclusive Digital Future



September - December 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, 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 fourth-quarter initiatives of 2024 demonstrate a focused effort to address challenges within Kenya's and Africa's ICT landscape, guided by its mission to promote open, accessible, and human rights-based policymaking.

A multi-stakeholder roundtable discussion on child online safety, held in collaboration with the Directorate of Children Services, aimed to strengthen collaborative frameworks for child protection, reflecting KICTANet's commitment to multistakeholder engagement and policy advocacy.

At the Africa IGF, KICTANet addressed digital exclusion for persons with disabilities, leveraging its research to advocate for universal access and meaningful connectivity. Capacity building workshops were conducted for women with disabilities in rural Kenya and in Kisumu, empowering marginalized communities with essential digital skills and awareness.

To further bridge the digital divide, digital inclusion projects were launched in Busia and Mandera, enhancing access to technology for marginalized groups.

These initiatives collectively underscore KICTANet's dedication to its guiding philosophy of fostering synergies in ICT policy, its commitment to evidence-based policy advocacy, robust research, collaborative multistakeholder engagement, and targeted capacity building, all aimed at creating a safer and more inclusive digital environment.



## KICTANet Launches Strategic Plan 2025-2027 Discussions

KICTANet is [developing its 2025-2027 strategic plan](#), building on its legacy of impactful ICT policy engagement.



The Board of Trustees led the secretariat to a retreat reviewing past successes and challenges, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening digital rights advocacy, policy reforms, digital literacy, and inclusion. Guided by a philosophy of multistakeholder collaboration, KICTANet aims to ensure open, accessible, and human rights-based ICT policymaking. With a rich history of fostering dialogue and shaping Kenya's digital landscape, the new plan will navigate evolving

challenges and ensure inclusive digital transformation. KICTANet invites collaboration to continue its vital role in shaping Kenya's digital future.

## POLICY ADVOCACY

During this period, activities centred on safeguarding digital rights and promoting inclusive digital governance, addressing key challenges within Kenya and the global landscape.

Firstly, KICTANet [condemned the Kenyan government's decision to block Telegram](#). This action was viewed as a direct violation of digital rights and freedom of expression, contradicting international commitments outlined in the Global Digital Compact. KICTANet emphasised that while maintaining exam integrity is a legitimate concern, resorting to app shutdowns undermines democratic principles and stifles economic growth. They urgently called for the restoration of access and advocated for rights-respecting solutions developed through multi-stakeholder consultations, highlighting the importance of dialogue in resolving complex digital issues.

Secondly, KICTANet actively engaged in discussions surrounding the [Maisha Namba initiative and](#)



[Digital Public Infrastructure](#) at the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) NIIMS Convening in Naivasha. Concerns were raised about potential data privacy infringements, the inadequacy of existing legal frameworks, the risk of exclusion for marginalized populations, and the potential for increased digital surveillance. KICTANet's contributions extended beyond mere participation; they involved strategic policy advocacy, active engagement in public discourse,

and the development of resources related to digital ID laws and data protection. This engagement underscored the necessity of a rights-based approach to digital identity, ensuring that technological advancements do not come at the expense of fundamental freedoms.

Finally, KICTANet continued its advocacy for inclusive multistakeholderism in [global digital governance](#). While acknowledging the Global Digital Compact's promotion of collaboration, they raised concerns about its state-centric approach, which could limit the meaningful engagement of non-governmental actors. They emphasized the importance of addressing power imbalances, capacity gaps, and resource constraints to ensure equitable representation, particularly for voices from the Global South. This advocacy highlights KICTANet's commitment to ensuring that global policy processes are truly inclusive and reflect the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders, fostering a more equitable and democratic digital future.

## CAPACITY BUILDING



*The Association for Progressive Communications (APC), KICTANet participants in a group photo during the digital safety and privacy workshop in Kisumu held on 27th September 2024.*

KICTANet's capacity-building initiatives are strategically designed to empower communities and strengthen digital resilience across Kenya, addressing a spectrum of critical digital challenges.

In the period, acknowledging the heightened vulnerability of women with disabilities in the digital space, KICTANet conducted a targeted two-day workshop in Rift Valley. This initiative went beyond general cybersecurity awareness, delving into the specific challenges faced by this demographic, including limited internet access, low digital literacy, and heightened exposure to technology-facilitated gender-based violence and online fraud. By tailoring the training to these unique circumstances, KICTANet aimed to provide practical skills and knowledge to enhance their online safety.

Secondly, in collaboration with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), KICTANet hosted a [digital safety and privacy workshop](#) in Kisumu. This workshop addressed a range of issues, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, privacy risks, online fraud, and the arbitrary limitation of fundamental rights. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these challenges and their impact on the enjoyment of online freedoms, the workshop aimed to equip participants with the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate the digital landscape safely and responsibly.

Thirdly, the Tatua Digital Resilience Centre launched a specialized training program for Social Justice Organizations (SJOs), focusing on the detection and investigation of malicious online infrastructure. This two-day program equipped SJOs with the skills needed to identify and track malicious emails, links, and domains, providing ongoing support from Tatua's experts. This initiative addressed the growing threat of cyberattacks targeting organizations working to promote social justice and human rights.

Furthermore, KICTANet extended its capacity-building efforts to Busia County, supporting a workshop focused on "Strengthening Digital Communities." This initiative aimed to enhance understanding of foundational digital skills, explore strategies for mobilizing training facilities, and foster collaboration with digital services providers. Supported by a coalition of partners, including UK International Development, the ICT Authority, and the Busia County Government, this workshop aimed to bridge the digital divide at the grassroots level.



Lastly, KICTANet, in partnership with Expertise France, conducted a [digital safety and cyber hygiene workshop for women with disabilities in rural Nakuru County](#). This initiative addressed the severe digital marginalization faced by this demographic, with only a small percentage of women with disabilities in Kenya accessing the Internet. By providing targeted training and resources, KICTANet aimed to empower these women to navigate the digital world safely and confidently.

## RESEARCH

KICTANet's policy advocacy and capacity building are supported by evidence-based research through an established working group on current and emerging issues. As a result, they spark conversations and advocate for tangible change in the digital landscape.

First, research on digital exclusion informed a session at the Africa Internet Governance Forum, focusing on universal access and meaningful connectivity for persons with disabilities. "Best Practices For Digital Inclusion of People With Disability In Kenyan Community Networks" research exposed the stark realities of digital inaccessibility, including the widespread inaccessibility of government websites and the significant digital divide that disproportionately affects rural communities. The Africa IGF session, grounded in KICTANet's findings, served as a platform to explore concrete solutions, advocating for policies and initiatives that effectively bridge this digital gap. By highlighting the specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities, KICTANet is pushing for a more equitable and inclusive digital future across Africa.

Secondly, KICTANet is actively addressing the urgent need for a robust cybersecurity culture, emphasizing the importance of inclusive engagement in [global cybersecurity](#) discussions. It recognises that the current global cybersecurity discourse is often hampered by geopolitical tensions and significant representation gaps for African nations. To counter these challenges, KICTANet advocates for strengthening economic security, fostering strategic partnerships, and promoting transparency.

KICTANet believes that building resilient [cybersecurity frameworks](#) requires global cooperation and a commitment to addressing the unique needs and perspectives of all stakeholders, particularly those from underrepresented regions. By pushing for a more inclusive and collaborative approach, KICTANet aims to create a safer and more secure digital environment for everyone.



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

KICTANet's stakeholder engagement efforts in the fourth quarter of 2024 were marked by a push for inclusivity and ethical governance in the digital sphere, spanning local, regional, and global platforms.

Firstly, a [baseline study](#) conducted as part of the EU-funded CADE project examined civil society organization (CSO) engagement in internet governance. This research brought to light the underrepresentation, key challenges, and capacity needs of CSOs, particularly those from the Global South. By highlighting these disparities, KICTANet aims to inform policy recommendations that will enhance CSO participation, with findings to be presented at IGF 2024, thereby amplifying marginalized voices in crucial digital policy discussions.



Secondly, KICTANet continued its advocacy for [inclusive multistakeholderism](#), emphasising the need for greater civil society participation in global policy processes. While acknowledging the Global Digital Compact's intent to promote collaboration, the organization raised concerns about its state-centric approach, which could inadvertently limit engagement from non-governmental actors. KICTANet stressed the importance of addressing power imbalances, capacity gaps, and resource constraints to ensure equitable representation, especially for voices from the Global South. This advocacy underscores the organization's commitment to ensuring that global digital governance reflects diverse perspectives and fosters a more equitable digital future.

On the other hand, KICTANet underscored the necessity of [cultivating a culture of responsible cyber behavior](#) through inclusive engagement in global cybersecurity discussions. Recognizing the limitations imposed by geopolitical tensions and African representation gaps within forums like the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), KICTANet advocated for strengthening economic security, fostering strategic partnerships, and promoting transparency to build resilient cybersecurity frameworks. This approach emphasizes the importance of global cooperation in addressing the complex challenges of cybersecurity.



The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) Forum in Nepal highlighted the impact of the digital divide on marginalized groups, particularly women, who face limited access, exclusion, and online harassment. KICTANet amplified [the](#)

[forum's call for inclusive policies](#), affordable internet, and digital literacy programs, emphasizing the need for civil society action to ensure digital equity, encapsulated in the #NothingAboutUsWithoutUs ethos.

Further, KICTANet solidified its commitment to advancing digital governance through a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\) with the County Assemblies Forum \(CAF\)](#). This partnership focuses on capacity building, policy advocacy, and digital transformation to improve service delivery and transparency in county governments. KICTANet will provide training on digital technologies, cybersecurity, and data privacy, while both organizations will collaboratively advocate for inclusive ICT policies.



The [2nd Annual Media-CSO Conference](#), organized by Civic Freedoms Forum (CFF) and the Kenya Correspondents Association (KCA), addressed the escalating threats to journalists and whistleblowers, including physical intimidation, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) lawsuits, and digital harassment, particularly targeting women journalists. KICTANet, alongside other experts, called for stronger legal protections, independent investigative bodies, digital safety training, and support for independent media. EU Ambassador Henriette Geiger underscored the role of media freedom in democracy, the risks of AI in disinformation, and the necessity of responsible AI governance to safeguard press freedom.



Lastly, Kenya is poised to lead in ethical AI development with the launch of the [UK-Kenya AI Challenge Fund](#), spearheaded by the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in collaboration with KICTANet. This initiative directly supports Kenya's national AI strategy by fostering ethical AI deployment in key sectors like healthcare, agriculture, education, and public services. The fund aims to enhance AI governance, empower institutions, and create real-world solutions while promoting transparency, equity, and accountability. Backed by the UK's Digital Access Programme, the fund strengthens partnerships between Kenya and the UK to drive innovation, bridge the digital divide, and ensure AI benefits all segments of society.

## CAMPAIGNS

KICTANet's campaigns during the quarter showcased its commitment to fostering a safer and more inclusive digital environment through targeted awareness and education initiatives.

The organization participated in [Cybersecurity Awareness Month in October](#), adopting the global theme "Secure Our World." This campaign was timely given the alarming statistic of 1.1 billion cyber threats detected in Kenya between April and June 2024. KICTANet focused on educating the public about rising risks, including system misconfigurations, malware, and brute force attacks, while providing practical advice on enhancing digital security, such as using strong passwords, enabling multi-factor authentication, updating software, and recognizing phishing scams. By highlighting the severity of the cyber threat landscape and offering actionable solutions, KICTANet aimed to empower individuals to protect themselves in the digital realm.



Secondly, [recognising the critical cybersecurity skills gap in Africa](#), KICTANet implemented innovative strategies to enhance awareness and education, especially in underserved regions. This involved organizing community workshops to demystify complex cybersecurity concepts and leveraging resources like KICTANet's [Mama Junior animations](#) and [e-learning platform](#) to bridge knowledge gaps. Collaborations with county governments, private sector partners, and local organizations ensured the delivery of relevant and well-supported training programs. This multifaceted approach, combining practical training, community engagement, and industry collaboration, was designed to equip individuals with essential cybersecurity skills and foster a safer digital landscape across the continent.

Thirdly, KICTANet participated in the [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#), focusing on the growing threat of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). Recognizing that TFGBV disproportionately affects women, girls, and gender minorities, threatening both individual safety and societal progress, KICTANet reiterated its commitment to combating this issue through research, policy advocacy, and capacity building. By highlighting the prevalence and impact of TFGBV, KICTANet called for collective action to create safer online spaces where technology empowers rather than harms.



## REPORTS



### [Universal Periodic Review 49th Session – Kenya – Joint stakeholder report: Human rights in the digital context in Kenya.](#)

The report highlights Kenya's digital rights issues, including the digital divide, freedom of expression, privacy, and online gender-based violence. It urges investment in infrastructure, legal reforms, stronger data protection, and action against online harassment. The report calls for transparency, accountability, and

inclusivity to uphold human rights.



### [Generational shifts? Civic tech in Kenya's Anti-Finance Bill protects.](#)

Kenya's 2024 Finance Bill sparked online protests against Value Added Tax (VAT) hikes, levies, and subsidy cuts. Digital platforms enabled mobilisation, but also saw disinformation, surveillance, and internet throttling. Calls for transparency, human rights protections, and digital literacy persist. This report sheds more light on these precedent events.



### [Best Practices For Digital Inclusion of People With Disability In Kenyan Community Networks.](#)

Community networks in Kenya work to bridge the digital divide but struggle with accessibility for PWDs. Key barriers include misconceptions, lack of assistive tech, training gaps, financial constraints, and infrastructure issues. To enhance inclusion, the report recommends investing in accessibility, involving PWDs in decisions, providing training, and raising awareness.



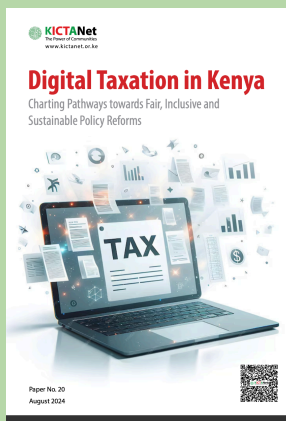
### [Navigating Kenya's Digital Information Ecosystem.](#)

The Digital Information Ecosystem Assessment (DIEA) in Kenya calls for improving digital safety through journalist training, digital literacy, and stronger cybersecurity. It emphasizes collective action to tackle digital threats and build a safer online environment. Key recommendations focus on stakeholder collaboration to enhance protection and resilience.

## POLICY BRIEFS



[Digitalisation and Climate Change: Connecting the two agendas for a just climate transition.](#) To assess digitalisation and climate change in Kenya, this brief 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.



[Digital Taxation in Kenya Policy Brief.](#) The study recommends five key actions for a fair, inclusive, and sustainable digital tax system in Kenya. It emphasizes building taxpayer trust through transparent policies, simplifying digital taxation for efficiency and compliance, and ensuring inclusivity through a multistakeholder approach. Additionally, it calls for balancing innovation with taxation to maintain fiscal sustainability and promoting fairness in Kenya's digital tax regime.

## SUBMISSIONS

- [KICTANet Public Comments on Digital Health Act Regulations:](#) This memorandum addresses the following regulations: the Digital Health (Health Information Management) Regulations, 2024; the Digital Health (Data Exchange) Regulations, 2024; and the Digital Health (Use of e-Health Applications and Technologies) Regulations, 2024. Our submission analyses the implications of these regulations for digital rights, data protection, and the digital economy, informed by stakeholder engagement and best practices.
- [Memorandum on The Tax Laws \(Amendment\) Bill \(National Assembly Bill No. 47 of 2024\):](#)
- [Memorandum on The Public Participation Bill 2024 - 30th October 2024:](#) Leveraging our expertise in human rights and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), KICTANet submitted this memorandum. In response to the call for input on the Public Participation Bill 2024, concerns and proposes amendments to pertinent provisions.



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