



Digital Rights Alliance Africa Strategic Plan 2026 - 2028

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Acronyms

Artificial Intelligence	AI
Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa	CIPESA
Civil society organisation	CSO
Digital Rights Alliance Africa	DRAA
Human rights defender	HRD
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law	ICNL
Non-governmental organisation	NGO
Telecommunications Company	Telco

Who we are

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 an enabling 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.¹ Members undertake research, legal advocacy and share experiences to navigate digital restrictions and promote digital policy reforms in line with international norms.

Vision

An Africa where digital rights are respected and protected.

Mission

To serve as a platform for members to protect, promote and defend digital rights and civic space in collaboration with stakeholders through advocacy, monitoring, research and strategic litigation for the enhanced enjoyment of digital rights in Africa.

Objectives of DRAA

DRAA employs a rights-based approach to its initiatives and aims to ensure that its undertakings are concrete, results-oriented and measurable. The following objectives guide the Alliance's initiatives.

1. To strengthen members' advocacy, awareness creation, and strategic litigation to advance digital rights in Africa by building capacity and supporting research, monitoring, and resource creation.
2. To collaborate to promote progressive frameworks on digital rights at local and regional levels.
3. To foster 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.

¹ Currently, members are drawn from Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

To achieve these objectives, DRAA jointly mobilises technical, financial and network resources to advance the broader goals and objectives as outlined in the strategic plan.

Core Values



Stakeholders

The Alliance draws its strength from its wide membership and inclusive decision-making. The stakeholders of DRAA include its membership but also extend to:

- **Local and National:** Community-based organisations, CSOs, HRDs, social movements, academics and researchers, private and public sector lawyers, law associations and judicial officers, private sector organisations, journalists, media houses, local and national governments and their structures, legislators, and regulators.
- **Regional:** East Africa Community, Economic Community for West African States, Southern Africa Development Community, intergovernmental organisations.
- **Continental:** Multilateral institutions including organs of the African Union.
- **International:** Civil society organizations, multilateral institutions, development partners and donors, academic institutions and researchers.

Our world today

In 2025, official development assistance reduced globally, diminishing support for human rights, civil society resilience, and civic freedoms. This challenge comes at a time

when DRAA seeks to expand strategic priorities, requiring members to adapt to the dire funding shortage when the needs are greater than ever.

In addition to a drastically changed funding and shifting geo-political landscape, political instability in some African jurisdictions has led to more digital rights violations and abuse. The perpetrators that have attacked civic space have largely not been held accountable, widening the impunity gap. From internet disruptions to growing distrust of online communication technologies, DRAA faces additional hurdles in amplifying its messages and mobilising its stakeholders to improve digital rights in Africa. The pace of digital innovation and use has far outpaced the legal and policy developments resulting in missing, defective and outdated regulations.

However, regardless of the identified external threats, DRAA has opportunities to advance its wider mission. Digital rights are still underserved in Africa despite their growing in relevance globally. The very nature of DRAA – diverse members and a membership base that is ripe for expansion – presents an opportunity for DRAA to grow in the next three years. DRAA has an opportunity to introduce a membership drive to increase numbers of those committed to its objectives.

DRAA progress - 2023-2025

Since DRAA was established in 2023, it has made progress in digital civic spaces. Members have benefitted from diverse learning sessions, engagement with multilateral human rights mechanisms, participation in national and regional convenings and a strategic planning meeting to shape the direction and future of DRAA. These are reflections drawn from a survey of Alliance members for the period 2023-2025:

- 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 are educative, empowering, and have helped members to gain knowledge and skills in diverse digital rights and cyber security issues. For example, one member in Zimbabwe initiated a legal case on the state's obligation to provide accessible internet, which resulted in the government initiating a programme to improve access in schools. A DRAA member in Uganda is seeking to clarify the responsibilities of telecommunication companies in ensuring personal data protection of their customers.
- 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. 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 are central to the digital rights agenda.

Using strengths, overcoming constraints

Noting challenges in the external environment, DRAA will strategically focus on leveraging its strengths to deliver its mandate.

The DRAA membership base is diverse, with a wide range of expertise and gender diversity that can help the Alliance advance its mission over the next three years. This expertise includes researchers, technologists, academics, HRDs, and civil society leaders. DRAA members represent a wide footprint on the African continent with traditional CSOs as well as grassroots and social movements represented in its membership. DRAA members have existing communication platforms such as the DRAA website, repository and social media platforms. Thus, DRAA is well-positioned to amplify and defend digital rights for Africa.

DRAA has an existing repository of information that is ripe for strengthening. This will give DRAA a competitive advantage as most loose networks are poor at knowledge management. With focus on improving the repository, DRAA will strategically place itself as a ‘go-to-authority’ on digital rights in Africa. By focusing on this strength, DRAA will also ensure that it can use the repository as its advocacy base as well as the goal of collaborative learning among DRAA members. A strong repository will also serve as the foundation of the advocacy work that is carried out by DRAA.

The Alliance will also make use of forums like the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF), global and regional Internet Governance Forums, RightsCon, and the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica) to showcase the work and successes of DRAA members and expand awareness of the Alliance and opportunities for participation.

In past years, DRAA has been hindered by the lack of a clear vision or targeted strategies for membership growth and fundraising. Being a loose unregistered network makes it difficult for DRAA to undertake direct action, such as launching strategic litigation in-

country. Instead, it must rely on members who have limited time to dedicate to DRAA. On the other hand, this loose network is advantageous in the instances that it has needed to respond to urgent situations, such as providing solidarity to members in countries facing digital rights violations, and to nimbly adjust its priorities in times of volatility, such as the 2025 funding cuts to civil society.

Other internal constraints include internal and external communication challenges that result in poor visibility, branding and limited story-telling impact. DRAA has also not yet implemented a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Agenda, hence some work goes uncaptured. Other challenges faced internally include:

- Lack of a standardised approach to research outputs by members
- Under representation of members from West Africa and North Africa, and marginalised and special interest groups such as persons with disabilities.
- Lack of a workplan to focus the strategic work of DRAA.

A survey of DRAA members taken in August 2025 showed that, despite these limitations, members would highly recommend participation in DRAA to others, indicating that DRAA has goodwill among members. The survey showed strengths in voice amplification, knowledge building, and collaboration. Members note that they wanted more collaboration, new members brought in, clearer communications, and more inclusive participation. Overall, members surveyed said their digital rights programming has improved since joining DRAA.

Priority issues informing DRAA's programming for the period 2026-2028

Data protection

On the African continent, about 39 countries have data protection laws and are at different stages of implementing. Priority issues that DRAA members would like to address include:

- a) Holding platforms accountable for harms that impact local populations;
- b) Sensitising and building the capacity of civil society to understand data protection best practices and navigate data protection laws;
- c) Collaborating with data protection authorities to alert them to breaches and support enforcement efforts;
- d) Advocating to pass rights-compliant data protection laws or strengthen existing ones in ways that close broad loopholes and increase the independence of data protection authorities; and
- e) Addressing data protection concerns of specific groups, such as children and persons with disabilities.

Goal: *DRAA members understand and can apply best practices in their national and regional advocacy for rights-compliant data protection laws. DRAA members have increased skills to engage and hold platforms accountable when they misuse personal data.*

Meaningful internet access

Infrastructural, legal and financial barriers persist and prevent Africans from enjoying the benefits of internet access. Members' priorities to improve meaningful access include:

- a) Strategizing to develop impactful advocacy, research and protection initiatives to counter internet shutdowns, throttling, etc. and other state- and telco-imposed restrictions;
- b) Advocating for rights-based, transparent, and inclusive development of policies to support last mile connection for marginalised communities and universal access in schools; and
- c) Researching, monitoring, and advocating for governments to promote universal access to telecommunications and broadband services in underserved areas and domestic implementation of global and regional commitments on connectivity are managed with public oversight and through meaningful engagement with local communities.

Goal: *DRAA members are better equipped with data, cross-country learnings, and capacity to advocate and litigate to improve meaningful access for civic groups and against internet shutdowns and other restrictions on the continent.*

Digital Surveillance

There is growing evidence that surveillance is taking place in African countries often without or outside of legal and policy frameworks. Priorities that DRAA members would like to explore include:

- a) Training journalists, CSOs, citizens on digital security best practices;
- b) Researching types of surveillance technologies deployed by governments in different contexts and the ways in which invasive surveillance is facilitated by private companies;
- c) Identifying and advocating for policy frameworks that enable or protect against surveillance e.g., cybersecurity and cybercrimes laws;
- d) Legally challenging disproportionate or extra-legal interception of information
- e) Promoting the creation or strengthening of independent oversight of surveillance practices; and
- f) Sensitising civil society and the public to the risks of surveillance.

Goal: DRAA members have increased capacity to understand, monitor and navigate the use of surveillance technologies and advocate for legal and policy frameworks that protect civil society, HRDs and media from surveillance.

Artificial Intelligence governance

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has recently overtaken conversations in digital rights. To address these emerging technologies, priorities include:

- a) Promoting meaningful, inclusive multistakeholder AI policymaking;
- b) Equipping civil society with the knowledge and resources to effectively participate in the development of rights-based national artificial intelligence strategies, policies and legal frameworks; and
- c) Researching how the design, development, procurement, and deployment of AI-enabled technologies impacts various sectors, e.g., climate and environment, energy, children’s rights, etc.

Goal: DRAA members are equipped to input on national AI strategies and legal frameworks and advocate for multistakeholder participation in AI governance.

Menu of Activities

To achieve its strategic goals, DRAA will undertake various activities depending on availability of funds over the next three years. Activities will be selected based on the openness of space in each country. Activities are clustered into four areas: **MONITOR! RESEARCH! ADVOCATE! LEARN!**

<p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Model laws ➤ Policy briefs ➤ Joint publications ➤ Comparative studies 	<p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Digital courses, digital literacy ➤ Cross-country learning ➤ Learning seminars on emerging digital rights issues
<p>Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue existing monitoring & documentation tool ➤ Cross-country trends and updates; early warning system 	<p>Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Statements & campaigns ➤ Strategic litigation, legal defence ➤ Law reform participation ➤ Capacity-building for government actors and other stakeholders ➤ Platform engagement ➤ Multistakeholder dialogue ➤ Multilateral bodies engagement ➤ International days celebrations, international conference representation

Geographical focus

DRAA seeks Africa-wide impact. However, cognisant of a difficult operating environment, the size of the African continent and reduced global funding, the Alliance identified the following countries as priority for 2026-2028. Due to complex political and legislative contexts, some countries appear in more than one category.

Category	General description	Country selection
Open countries	These present an opportunity for positive legal reform or action	Democratic Republic of Congo Kenya Nigeria Lesotho South Africa
Transition countries	There is an anticipated opportunity of positive or negative development. Some space exists for advocacy and a chance to reverse a slide into total digital authoritarianism exists.	Ethiopia Kenya Lesotho Nigeria Tanzania Uganda
Closing and Closed countries	These are environments requiring survival strategies. There are serious regulatory issues, Internet shutdowns have happened or are possible.	Democratic Republic of Congo Tanzania Togo Uganda Zimbabwe

Internal Alliance Priorities

To strengthen the DRAA network, there is a need to strengthen its membership, increase funding and communicate strategically both internally and externally.

Funding & membership drive

DRAA acknowledges that since its inception, one of the biggest obstacles to the network has been the lack of strategic fundraising and membership growth. Recognising the power of alliance through its members, for 2026-2028, DRAA will initiate its fundraising and membership strategy by:

- a) Requiring all members to make in-kind contributions of staff time and expertise to the Alliance. Each member will be required to donate a minimum of five (5) hours to the Alliance per month.
- b) Establishing a joint fundraising and membership committee that will be trained on fundraising and will lead donor outreach to fund the 2026-2028 strategy.

Communication

DRAA acknowledges the need to strengthen its communication capacity. The alliance will initiate a strategic communications plan with focus on storytelling for impact. The strategic plan will increase visibility of the network and strategically use activity outputs for communications drive with stakeholders. The three pillars of the communication in the plan will be:

- a) Internal communication: How DRAA communicates internally to share information, trend alerts, and opportunities for intervention and solicit input and decisions for urgent action.
- b) External communication: How DRAA communicates with stakeholders concerning Alliance initiatives. It will include shared external language and outputs.
- c) Media engagements: How and what DRAA will communicate with the media, how DRAA will select media with which to communicate, and how to tailor messaging to diverse audiences.

Learning & Success

DRAA envisions long-term learning as central to its success. By the end of 2028, success will be:

- a) A better-connected alliance where members learn continuously from each other;
- b) An increase in membership of DRAA;
- c) New streams of funding for DRAA;
- d) Increased improvements in new or existing laws and policies on the African continent on digital rights; and
- e) Strengthened norms, guidance and commitments by multilateral bodies to uphold digital rights.