



DIGITAL RIGHTS AND INCLUSION IN AFRICA REPORT

ANGOLA
COUNTRY REPORT

2024

Angola



Executive Summary

The 2024 Angola country report was developed through document review, key informant interviews, consultations with different players within the digital rights space, and use of the TheScore Index. The review focussed on seven thematic areas: Internet Access, Freedom of Expression, Data Protection and Privacy, Censorship and Content Moderation, Access to Information, Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies and Digital Inclusion. Findings reveal that during the period under review, Angola made significant strides in expanding internet access, with a 3.1% increase in internet penetration from 2023 to 39.3% in 2024.⁴² However, high data costs, unequal service distribution, and broadband infrastructural challenges in rural areas limit access for lower-income populations. Concerns over censorship, surveillance, and data privacy, particularly affecting marginalised groups such as women and people with disabilities, mark the digital landscape. Despite legal advancements, the enforcement of data protection and freedom of expression laws still needs urgent improvement. Key recommendations include subsidising data costs, expanding public wi-fi, integrating digital literacy into education, strengthening press freedom, improving cybersecurity coordination, enhancing content transparency, and ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities. Addressing these challenges will be essential for achieving broader digital inclusion and protecting citizens' rights.

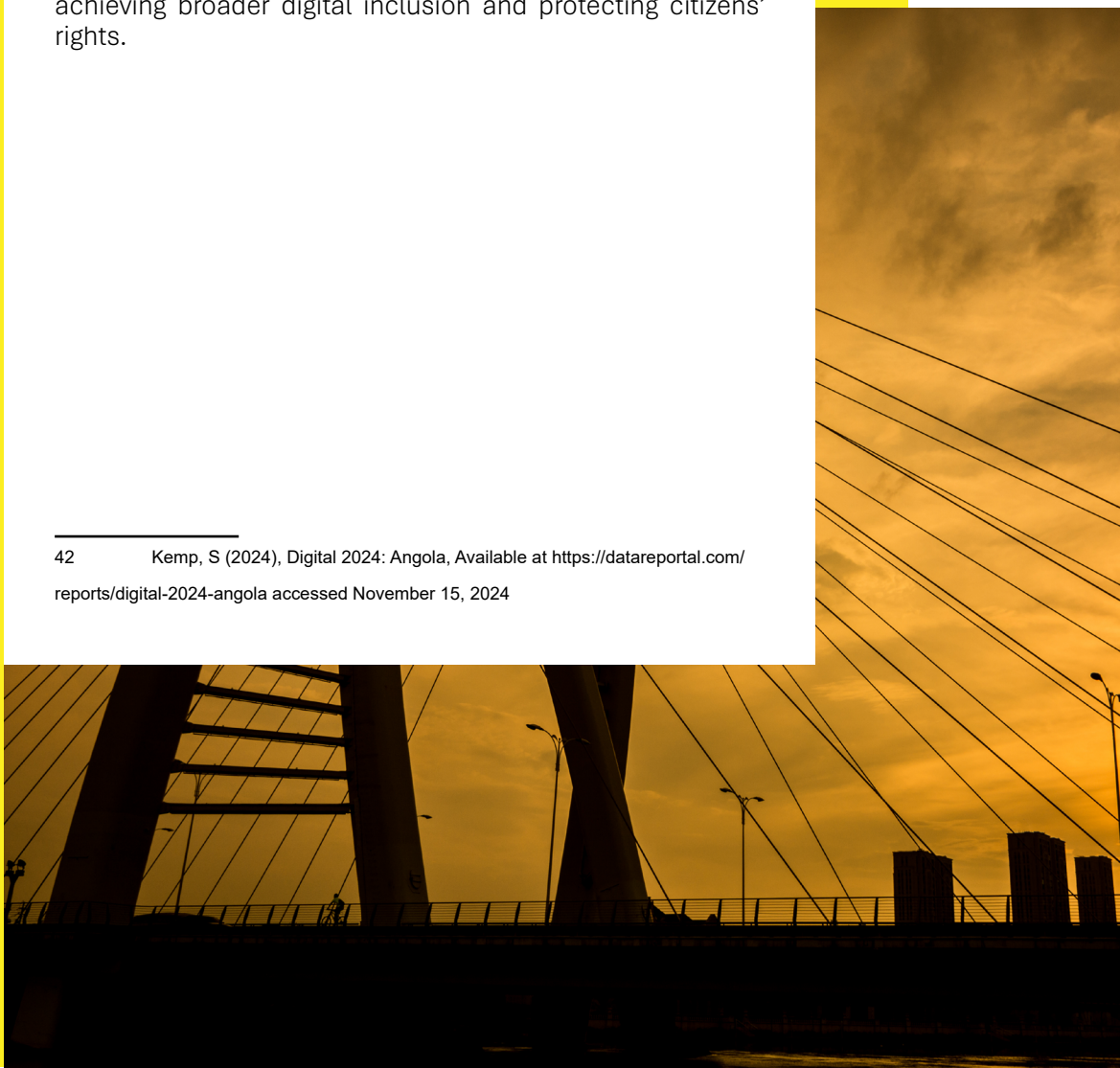
42

Kemp, S (2024), Digital 2024: Angola, Available at <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-angola> accessed November 15, 2024

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Introduction

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Over the past year, Angola has made notable progress in improving internet access, with the country's internet penetration reaching 39.3% in January 2024, a 3.1% increase from 2023.⁴³ Investments in mobile networks, fiber-optic infrastructure, and the combined efforts of the government and private sector to expand coverage across the nation primarily drive growth. Despite the increase in connectivity, internet service costs remain high, particularly for lower-income communities, limiting widespread access. Moreover, urban areas enjoy better infrastructure than rural regions, where limited investment and power outages further complicate reliable internet access. Additionally, the digital landscape in Angola is marked by challenges related to freedom of expression, censorship, and data privacy as government control over online platforms intensifies and surveillance practices raise privacy concerns. The country is also grappling with the digital divide, with marginalised groups, including women and people with disabilities, facing additional barriers to full participation in the digital realm.

Internet access

Angola has made significant strides in improving internet access over the past year. As of January 2024, internet penetration was approximately 39.3%, a 3.1% increase from January 2023.⁴⁴ This growth is primarily due to investments in mobile networks and fiber-optic infrastructure and efforts by both government and private sector entities to expand coverage nationwide.⁴⁵ Mobile networks are the dominant means of internet access, with more than 95% of internet users relying on mobile phones for online connectivity.⁴⁶ The growing affordability of smartphones has contributed significantly to the increasing mobile internet penetration.⁴⁷

Internet service costs remain considerably high. The average monthly price of data in 2024 was \$47.52⁴⁸ while 1 gigabyte cost an average of \$1.01, as of August 2023.⁴⁹ According to a 2024 report by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), data costs in Angola consume as much as 9.5% of the average income.⁵⁰ This pricing structure limits individuals’ access to online information, particularly in lower-income communities.⁵¹ In addition, internet services are unevenly distributed, with urban areas enjoying relatively better infrastructure than rural regions. More investment in rural telecom infrastructure and the need for digital skills training among local populations worsen the disparity.⁵²

Coupled with restrictive costs and infrastructural deficits, inconsistent electricity supply remains a significant barrier to universal internet access. Many regions experience frequent power outages, which affect internet service availability and challenge reliable connectivity, particularly in remote areas.⁵³

Freedom of expression

In 2024, there were no reported cases of internet shutdowns, compared to 2023. However, in August 2024, the President signed into law the National Security Bill which, under Article 36, authorises the government to prohibit public or private radio stations from broadcasting and disrupt telecommunications services under ill-defined exceptional circumstances.⁵⁴ The bill will undoubtedly curtail freedom of expression.

There are growing concerns over the expanding potential for mass surveillance by government agencies, especially the National Information Services Agency (SINS), known for its extensive surveillance capabilities. Although no formal laws explicitly mandate surveillance, local and international reports indicate that online activists and journalists are increasingly subjected to harassment and arrest for their digital activities.⁵⁵

The threat of arrest, harassment, or digital surveillance has deterred many people from engaging in online political discussions. As a result, self-censorship becomes a survival strategy, as individuals limit their participation to avoid potential consequences.⁵⁶

44 As above.

45 International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2023). “Annual Report on Mobile Connectivity in Sub-Saharan Africa.”

46 World Bank. (2024). “Angola Mobile Internet Access Statistics.”

47 Angola Ministry of Telecommunications. (2023). “Internet Access Through Mobile Networks in Angola.”

48 “The price of fixed-line broadband in 219 countries,” Cable, accessed February 13, 2024, <https://www.cable.co.uk/broadband/pricing/worldwide-comparison/>.

49 “Global broadband pricing league table 2024,” accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.cable.co.uk/broadband/pricing/worldwide-comparison/>.

50 International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2024). The Cost of Internet Access in Sub-Saharan Africa.

51 International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2024). The Cost of Internet Access in Sub-Saharan Africa.

52 African Development Bank. (2023). “Energy Access and Internet Connectivity in Africa.”

53 International Energy Agency (IEA). (2023). “Electricity Access in Rural Africa.”

54 Human Rights Watch. “Angola: President signs laws curtailing speech, association,” accessed 9 January 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/10/angola-president-signs-laws-curtailing-speech-association>

55 Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2023). Angola: Authorities Intensify Internet Censorship During Political Unrest. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/angola-internet-censorship>

56 Mueller, M. (2022). The Politics of Online Speech: Self-Censorship in Authoritarian Regimes. Cambridge University Press.

‘You need to be always careful about what you say online. While you might not be attacked online, it might happen in person. Online violence can quickly be taken offline, posing a serious problem to safety and security’

- Key Informant A

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Social media platforms are rife with derogatory comments and targeted harassment, often sexualising women’s political activism or discrediting their opinions based on gender. A 2024 report by The Global Institute for Gender Equality revealed that women in Angola experience some of the highest rates of gendered online harassment in Southern Africa, with nearly 60% of Angolan women politicians reporting harassment or threats on social media.⁵⁷ These forms of abuse not only deter women from engaging in political discourse but also contribute to a hostile online environment that disproportionately affects women’s digital freedom.

Cyber harassment is often directed at women who speak out on issues related to gender equality, human rights, and social justice. A 2024 study by Digital Rights Africa found that more than 50% of Angolan women who are active on social media report experiencing online harassment. For many, this harassment becomes a significant barrier to their digital freedom of expression, leading them to reconsider their engagement in online spaces.⁵⁸

While there has been some legislative progress on protecting women from online violence, such as the Law on Domestic Violence (Law No 25/11) and the Penal Code (Law No 38/20) revisions (which recognize online harassment), implementation remains inadequate. Law enforcement agencies lack the capacity and resources to effectively track and prosecute online gender-based violence (GBV), leaving many women vulnerable to abuse without recourse.⁵⁹

Data Protection and Privacy

Angola’s data protection and privacy framework has evolved to match the demands of the digital age, although significant challenges remain in its implementation and enforcement. The country has the Protection of Personal Data (Law No 22/21), which aims to safeguard citizens’ data. However, despite this progress, the law is still in the early stages of implementation, and concerns persist regarding its effectiveness, particularly in enforcement and compliance.⁶⁰

Angola also has laws that criminalise the spread of “false news” or “sedition” online. Critics view these laws as tools for controlling dissent and curbing free speech. Article 224 of the Penal Code (Law No 38/20) criminalises the spread of ‘fake news’, particularly by the media. The provision aims to reduce the dissemination of false information on social media platforms and websites.⁶¹ As a result, journalists and media outlets are increasingly cautious about publishing content perceived as politically sensitive, especially regarding government policies, corruption, or human rights violations.⁶² According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2023), Angola ranks 110th out of 180 countries regarding press freedom, with journalists frequently facing threats, harassment, and legal charges for their work.

In addition, Angola is increasingly exploring smart city projects to modernise urban infrastructure and improve service delivery. These projects often incorporate digital technologies like sensors, cameras, and data analytics to optimise traffic management and public safety. In 2024, the capital city, Luanda, is undergoing pilot projects that include surveillance cameras and facial recognition.

The installation of surveillance cameras and facial recognition could increase security. Still, civil society is concerned that this could pose substantial privacy risks if not adequately regulated and monitored.

- Key Informant B

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- 57 Global Institute for Gender Equality. (2024). “Gendered Online Harassment in Southern Africa.” Global Equality Report.
- 58 Digital Rights Africa. (2024). “Barriers to Digital Freedom: Online Harassment of Angolan Women.” Digital Rights Report.
- 59 UN Women. (2023). “Gender Digital Divide in Angola.” UN Women Southern Africa Report.
- 60 Gagliardone, I., & Zeng, L. (2023). Internet Governance and Political Control in Africa. Routledge.
- 61 Santos, A. (2020). Angola’s Law on Fake News: A Threat to Free Speech? African Journalism Review, 11(3), 151-165.
- 62 Puddephatt, A. (2021). The Global Chilling: Self-Censorship in the Digital Age. Open Society Foundations.

A 2024 survey by Deloitte Angola revealed that 48% of respondents reported their online banking accounts had been compromised at some point.⁶³ In 2024, between 200 and 5000 cyber attacks were reported per day⁶⁴, with the National Bank (BNA) receiving 250 per day, 100 fewer than the 2023 average.⁶⁵ This surge in cybercrime highlights the vulnerability of Angola's financial infrastructure to sophisticated digital threats. The country has a National Cybersecurity Strategy (2021-2030) and a Cybercrime Law, which align with some international standards.⁶⁶ However, while these initiatives represent steps forward, there are concerns regarding the effectiveness of enforcement, especially as cybercrime techniques rapidly evolve.

Censorship and Content Moderation

Like many other countries, Angola interacts with global tech companies such as Meta (Facebook), Google (YouTube), and ByteDance (TikTok), which are under pressure to comply with local laws and government requests for content removal. According to Meta's Transparency Report, in 2023 the Angolan government requested the removal of several political posts on Facebook and Instagram, citing violations of local laws, including incitement of violence or defamation. Meta complied with a subset of these requests, adhering to its internal content moderation guidelines. In the first quarter of 2024, Angola made 12 content takedown requests. In addition, TikTok's 2024 transparency report revealed that it received 25 requests from Angola to remove content related to hate speech, harassment, and political misinformation. About 40% of these requests were related to political speech. YouTube's Transparency Report (2024) highlighted that Angola made 15 requests for content removal in 2023. Most of these requests were for videos containing political criticism or allegations of corruption.⁶⁷

More comprehensive public data is needed regarding content takedown requests to the National Communications Institute (INACOM), Angola's regulatory authority for communications. The statistics are not publicly released.

Access to Information

Angola's Constitution guarantees citizens the right to access information, although its implementation must be more consistent. However, while these constitutional guarantees are essential, Angola's legal and institutional frameworks for access to information remain underdeveloped and face numerous challenges.

The 2 laws which govern access to information are the Data Protection Law (Law No 22/11) and Law on Access to Administrative Documents (Law No 11/02). While laws allow citizens to request information from public authorities, application must be more consistent. There are limited penalties for non-compliance, and bureaucratic hurdles often obstruct meaningful access to government-held data.⁶⁸ The absence of robust access to information law exacerbates the situation, as citizens' ability to access essential government information remains limited by vague legal language and weak enforcement mechanisms.

Digital literacy remains another significant challenge to accessing information, particularly in rural and underserved areas. While mobile phone access has increased, many Angolans need more skills to navigate online spaces effectively. According to UNESCO (2024), 27% of the population is digitally illiterate, with older generations and rural communities most affected.⁶⁹ This digital literacy gap further restricts access to digital information and services, hindering public engagement with government resources.

63 Deloitte Angola. (2024). Cybersecurity Survey: Trends in Financial Fraud and Banking.

64 "Ataque cibernético sem danos no BNA [BNA cyber attack without damage]." Jornal de Angola, January 18, 2024, <https://www.jornaldeangola.ao/ao/noticias/ataque-cibernetico-sem-danos-....> Cyberattacks

65 Victória Maviluka, "BNA regista média diária de 250 tentativas de ciberataques [BNA records daily average of 250 attempted cyberattacks]," Economia e Mercado, April 25, 2024, <https://www.economiaemercado.co.ao/artigo/bna-regista-media-diar-de-2-...>; "National Bank of Angola Sees 100 Fewer Cyberattacks Per Day in 2024," 360 Mozambique, April 25, 2024, <https://360mozambique.com/world/angola/national-bank-of-angola-sees-100-...>

66 Council of Europe. (2020). Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.

67 YouTube Transparency Report. (2024). Government Requests for Content Takedowns in Angola.

68 Access Info. (2023). Freedom of Information in Angola: A Status Report.

69 UNESCO. (2024). Digital Literacy in Angola: Challenges and Opportunities.

AI and Emerging Technologies

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies are beginning to impact Angola, particularly in the banking, agriculture, and healthcare sectors. However, the adoption of these technologies is still in its early stages. Approximately 30% of financial transactions in the country are now AI-assisted, a figure that has been steadily growing since 2021 with AI enhancing the accessibility and efficiency of financial services, particularly for underserved populations (BNA, 2024).⁷⁰

Angola has yet to introduce specific regulations around AI, but discussions are ongoing within government and private sector circles about the ethical use of AI technologies. In 2024, a coalition of Angolan technology firms and universities began collaborating to develop guidelines for the ethical use of AI. These efforts ensure that AI development aligns with human rights principles, avoids perpetuating biases, and contributes to equitable development.⁷¹

Digital Inclusion

In response to connectivity challenges, the Universal Service Fund (USF), known as the Communications Development Support Fund (FADCOM) in Angola, is used to increase universal access to the Internet. The exact amount in the fund remains unknown, highlighting the government's failure to proactively disclose information and share details transparently. According to the Angola Communications Regulatory Authority (IRCA), the USF has supported the construction of mobile network towers and expanding internet services in underserved areas.⁷² However, there are concerns regarding the transparency of the fund.

'The fund has been used to increase access to free internet. We have implemented public wi-fi projects, particularly in urban areas like Luanda, to provide free internet access in key locations. These developments are, however, mostly confined to urban areas.'

Key Informant C

Angola also has the National Broadband Plan (2016-2025), which focuses on expanding fiber-optic networks, increasing mobile internet availability, and boosting broadband access in underserved regions.⁷³ The Digital Transformation Strategy (2020-2025) also seeks to modernise the country's digital infrastructure, enhance e-government services, and promote digital literacy while expanding the rollout of 5G networks.⁷⁴ The implementation of the plan and strategy is yet to be seen.

Traditionally, marginalised groups, including People With Disabilities (PWDs), lack the necessary infrastructure to access digital services. The design of most digital platforms and services needs to account for the needs of PWDs, leaving them at a disadvantage. For instance, websites, mobile applications, and government services often lack accessibility features, such as screen readers, sign language support, or audio instructions for individuals with hearing or visual impairments.⁷⁵

70 BNA (2024). accessed 9 January 2025 <https://www.bna.ao/#/pt/publicacoes-e-media/relatorios/relatorio-anual-contas/detalhe/601>

71 Tech Hub Angola. (2024). Ethical AI Guidelines: Collaborative Efforts in Angola's Tech Sector.

72 Angola Communications Regulatory Authority (IRCA). (2024). The Role of the Universal Service Fund in Angola's Digital Transformation.

73 Angolan Ministry of Education. (2022). "Digital Literacy in Angola."

74 MINTTICS. (2020). "Digital Transformation Strategy (2020-2025)."

75 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). (2024). Promoting Digital Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities in Angola.

The Score Index

Londa 2025 Key Indicators	ACHPR Declaration <i>(P stands for Principle)</i>	Score	Justification
1. Internet Shutdowns	P38(2)	4	There were no confirmed internet shutdowns in 2024.
2. Inexistent laws, policies, and other measures to promote universal, equitable, affordable, and meaningful access to the internet	P37	3	Laws exist, but there needs to be more clarity regarding implementation and effectiveness.
3. False News Criminalisation	P22(2)	2	The law exists but is ill-defined, meaning the government can use it to curtail freedom of expression.
4. Sedition Legislation	P22(2)	2	The law on sedition leaves room for misuse and arrest of content creators
5. Arbitrary Arrests and Harassments of the Media, HRDs and Citizens	P20(1) & (2)	2	Neth Nahara (real name Ana da Silva) remains in prison for criticizing the President on TikTok in 2023.
6. Data Protection Legislation.	P42	4	The law exists, but there are areas for improvement particularly in implementation.
7. States interfere and require the removal of online content by internet intermediaries.	P38 and P39(4)	2	Angola has requested removing mostly political online content from social media sites, including TikTok and Facebook.
8. Invasion of Privacy of Communications	P41	3	The facial recognition software implemented in Luanda could lead to state surveillance of citizens.
9. Failure by the government to proactively disclose and disseminate information digital technologies.	P29(3)	3	The government does not publicly disclose resources under USF and their allocation. Content takedowns are also not published.
10. AI and Emerging Technologies national strategies	P39(6)	2	Angola has yet to introduce specific regulations around AI.
11. Adoption of specific child laws, policies and measures promoting children's digital safety and privacy online	P37(5)	2	Angola does not have a specific law or policy focussed on children's digital safety. The rights of children are protected under the Law on the Protection and Comprehensive Development of the Child (Law 25/12).

12. Digital Inclusion	P37(3)	2	The government provides free internet in some parts of the capital city, Luanda. This increases inclusivity, given the restrictive cost of broadband and data bundles. However, the limited market competition continues to make the price of accessing the internet restrictive.
TOTAL (up to 60)		31	

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Conclusion

In conclusion, while Angola has made notable progress in expanding internet access and digital infrastructure, significant challenges still need to be addressed, particularly regarding affordability, infrastructure gaps, and unequal access between urban and rural areas. High data costs continue to limit the ability of many Angolans, especially those in lower-income communities, to benefit from online connectivity fully. Issues of censorship, surveillance, and harassment further restrict freedom of expression, with particular risks for women and marginalized groups. Moreover, the country's legal and institutional frameworks for data protection and access to information remain underdeveloped, and inadequate digital literacy and accessibility hinder efforts to close the digital divide. Although initiatives like the Universal Service Fund and the National Broadband Plan aim to address these disparities, the effective implementation of these policies is crucial for ensuring more equitable digital inclusion in the future.

Recommendations

Government

- **Subsidize data costs:** To address the high cost of internet access, particularly in lower-income communities, the government could explore subsidies or tax incentives for internet service providers to reduce broadband and mobile data costs. This would make internet services more accessible to the broader population, especially in rural areas.
- **Promote public wi-fi projects:** Continue expanding free public wi-fi initiatives in key urban locations like Luanda while ensuring these projects are extended to underserved rural areas. Collaboration with local communities could help identify strategic places for these services.
- **Integration of digital skills into education:** The government should incorporate digital literacy into the national curriculum, starting from primary education, through the relevant ministry to support long-term digital inclusion efforts.
- **Strengthen press freedom:** To improve the media landscape, Angola must enhance the legal protection of journalists and media outlets. This includes ensuring that laws against disinformation are not used to stifle free speech and critical reporting. The government should make legal reforms to protect journalists from harassment and legal threats.
- **Improve enforcement of laws:** While Angola has made progress with laws protecting digital rights, including the Protection of Personal Data Law, Domestic Violence law, and the Penal Code, effective enforcement remains a challenge. Strengthening institutional capacity, through training and budget allocations, to monitor and enforce data protection laws is necessary to ensure citizens' rights are safeguarded in the digital age.
- **Strengthen coordination among cybersecurity entities:** Ensure that Angola's various cybersecurity agencies work together to address the evolving cyber threat landscape and share intelligence and best practices.
- **Increase transparency in content takedown requests:** The government's content takedown requests to social media companies and digital platforms should be more transparent. The National Communications Institute (INACOM) should publish periodic reports on content removal requests and their outcomes to foster trust in the digital space.
- **Ensure accessible digital platforms for PWDs:** Digital platforms and services, including government websites and mobile applications, should be designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities (PWDs). This includes ensuring services feature accessibility options such as screen readers, sign language, and audio instructions to enable equitable access to online resources.
- **Develop AI regulation framework:** Angola should expedite the development of specific AI regulations that ensure the ethical use of these technologies. In addition, the government should establish an independent body to oversee AI developments, ensuring they are

fair, unbiased, and aligned with human rights.

- **Ethical AI in government and private sector projects:** Ensure that AI applications, particularly in innovative city projects, are used responsibly and in ways that respect privacy rights. The government should prioritize public consultation and transparency to avoid misuse when rolling out such technologies.
- **Transparency in using the Universal Service Fund:** Information on the USF is minimal. The government should ensure that information relating to its use is shared publicly to ensure greater accountability and transparency.

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Civil Society Organisations

- **Monitor use of the Universal Service Fund:** Civil Society organisations should monitor the use of the USF for greater accountability and transparency.
- **Hold government accountable:** Angola has put in place laws and policies, which, if implemented correctly could improve the digital rights of the populace. Civil Society should continuously hold the government accountable through monitoring and advocating for implementation of these laws and policies.

