

# LONDA 2025

## DIGITAL RIGHTS & INCLUSION IN AFRICA REPORT

### Tanzania

Country Report



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374 Borno Way, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria.  
[media@paradigmhq.org](mailto:media@paradigmhq.org)  
[www.paradigmhq.org](http://www.paradigmhq.org)



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# Tanzania

By Anonymous

## Executive Summary

This report covers the state of digital rights and inclusion in Tanzania for the year 2025. Throughout the years, Tanzania has made numerous efforts to bridge the digital gap. Furthermore, the nation has adopted Information Communication Technology (ICT) policies and supportive legal frameworks to build a robust digi-

tal ecosystem. Despite the efforts made through the various pieces of legislation, including the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, there are still areas of grave concern that impact disproportionately on different demographics of the country.<sup>1</sup> The report employed a combination of qualitative research methods including literature review, policy and legal analysis, monitoring and observations of digital rights trends throughout the year. The report also gained insights

1. CIPESA, State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2024 Africa's Electoral democracy and technology: pitfalls and promises (accessed on 6 November 2025) [https://cipesa.org/wp-content/files/reports/State\\_of\\_Internet\\_Freedom\\_in\\_Africa\\_Report\\_2024.pdf](https://cipesa.org/wp-content/files/reports/State_of_Internet_Freedom_in_Africa_Report_2024.pdf)

from The Score Index, developed by Paradigm Initiative, to assess compliance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Declaration, evaluating the state of digital rights. This report gained insights from desktop research on existing laws, policies, policy briefs, news, other reports and commentaries from different stakeholders. Tanzania is moderately compliant as there are areas

of improvement, such as revision and development of specific laws, the Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) issued its first-ever ruling regarding child data protection in August 2025, highlighting its proactive enforcement stance<sup>2</sup>. This report aims to shed light on what currently exists, identify the gaps and make recommendations to help Tanzania's digital space thrive.



2. Fin and Law. (2025, August 20). The Tanzania Personal Data Protection Commission issues its decision on protection of child's data. <https://finandlaw.co.tz/2025/08/20/the-tanzania-personal-data-protection-commission-issues-its-decision-on-protection-of-childs-data/>

## Introduction

In 2016, Tanzania's digital ecosystem was still at a relatively early stage. Internet access was limited, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the population resides. Mobile connectivity was expanding, but broadband infrastructure remained uneven, and internet use was largely confined to urban centres. During this period, the regulatory environment increasingly relied on restrictive laws such as the Media Services Act (2016), which laid the foundation for criminalisation of online expression and the control of digital spaces<sup>3</sup>.

By 2017–2019, Tanzania experienced gradual growth in mobile and internet subscriptions, alongside rising concerns around surveillance and misuse of personal data. Allegations by opposition figures and journalists including claims that telecommunications companies had shared user data with the government highlighted early warning signs of weak data protection safeguards. At the same time, civil society

and independent media began reporting increased pressure, arrests, and censorship linked to online activity, reflecting a tightening digital civic space.

In 2020, these challenges became more visible during the general elections, when the government imposed partial internet disruptions and social media restrictions.<sup>4</sup> These actions demonstrated the state's growing willingness to interfere with internet access during periods of political activity, reinforcing concerns raised in earlier Londa reports about internet shutdowns, freedom of expression, and access to information.

Between 2021 and 2023, internet usage continued to expand, driven primarily by mobile broadband. However, this growth was accompanied by persistent regulatory gaps. Laws on cybercrime, electronic transactions, and online content moderation were actively enforced, often in ways that disproportionately restricted speech

3. Media Services Act, 2016 (United Republic of Tanzania) (accessed on 6 November 2025), <https://www.parliament.go.tz/uploads/bills/1454936437-The%20Media%20Services%20Act,%202016.pdf>

4. NetBlocks, Internet disrupted in Tanzania on eve of presidential elections 2020 (accessed on 6 November 2025), <https://netblocks.org/reports/internet-disrupted-in-tanzania-on-eve-of-presidential-elections-oy9abny3>

and access to information. Although the Personal Data Protection Act was enacted in 2022, it was criticised for vague provisions, including the absence of clear timelines for registration and notification of data controllers and processors<sup>5</sup>. As a result, Tanzania’s compliance with regional digital rights standards remained moderate at best.

By 2024, Tanzania made notable institutional progress. The government inaugurated a Data Protection Authority on April 3 2024<sup>6</sup>, signalling an intention to strengthen data governance. The launch of the Tanzania Digital Economy Strategy 2024–2034 further reflected efforts to position the country as a regional digital hub in East Africa<sup>7</sup>. The strategy’s six pillars, namely digital infrastructure, governance, skills, innovation, inclusion, and digital financial services outlined an ambitious vision for leveraging digital technologies

for economic growth and social development. However, these policy gains were accompanied by persistent regulatory and rights-based concerns. The penalties imposed on information holders for releasing information under the Access to Information Act remained disproportionately severe, creating a chilling effect on transparency. Government actions continued to undermine access to information through deliberate internet throttling and platform restrictions. In May 2025, authorities restricted access to X (formerly Twitter), limiting online civic discourse<sup>8</sup>. In addition, the introduction of Tanzania’s Virtual Private Network (VPN) policy in 2024 exposed vulnerable communities to heightened risks<sup>9</sup>. Where VPNs had previously enabled safer anonymous expression, users were now required to obtain government authorisation, effectively removing a critical layer of privacy and digital security for those most in need.

5. Personal Data Protection Act, No. 11 of 2022 (United Republic of Tanzania) (accessed on 6 November 2025), <https://tanzlii.org/akn/tz/act/gn/2023/395b-1/eng%402023-06-13>
6. Tanzania launches Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) on 3 April 2024 (accessed on 6 November 2025), <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tanzania-launches-commission-to-oversee-personal-data-protection-4577912>
7. Ministry of Information, communication and information technology “Tanzania Digital Economy Strategy 2024–2034” (2024) [https://www.ictc.go.tz/public/documents/tanzania\\_digital\\_economy\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.ictc.go.tz/public/documents/tanzania_digital_economy_strategy.pdf) (accessed on 10 November 2025)
8. Minority Africa ‘My privacy matters’: Tanzania’s new VPN policy leaves LGBTQ+ individuals exposed’ (2024) <https://minorityafrica.org/my-privacy-matters-tanzanias-new-vpn-policy-leaves-lgbtq-individuals-exposed/> (accessed on November 2025)
9. 3 Daily News “Digital growth spurs youth inclusion, connectivity” (2025) <https://dailynews.co.tz/digital-growth-spurs-youth-inclusion-connectivity/> (accessed on 5 January, 2026).

In 2025, Tanzania's digital landscape presents a complex mix of progress and persistent challenges. According to the 2022 national census, the population stands at approximately 61 million, with a majority living in rural areas<sup>10</sup>. By September 2025, the country recorded 56.3 million active internet subscriptions, translating to an estimated 82.6–87% connectivity rate<sup>11</sup>.

Mobile devices dominate internet use, with over 99% of users accessing the internet via smartphones, supporting growth in mobile money, e-commerce, and online services. Yet, regulatory practices continue to undermine digital rights. On October 29 2025, during Tanzania's general election, the government imposed a nationwide total internet shutdown lasting five days and six hours<sup>12</sup> marking a significant escalation from the partial shutdowns observed in 2020. The government did not only mandate a shutdown but also instituted a curfew in the major city of Dar-es-Salaam, deployed

military in major cities and closed down economic activities, including schools, for the whole duration. A report by Cable News Network (CNN) verified by forensic video content of police brutality recorded by citizens during the shutdown.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike 2016, when Tanzania's primary challenge was limited connectivity, 2025 is characterised by widespread infrastructure expansion but shrinking civic space online. While the country has transitioned from low internet access to near-universal connectivity in technical terms, meaningful access, digital inclusion, and the protection of digital rights have not progressed at the same pace. Regulatory responses to political dissent such as shutdowns, surveillance, and platform restrictions continue to offset gains made through policy reforms and infrastructure investment.

This report aims to shed light on what currently exists, identify the gaps, and make

10. National Sensus "National Sensus 2022" (2022) <https://sensa.nbs.go.tz/> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

11. Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority "Communication Statistics Report for the Quarter Ending September 2025" (2025) [https://www.tcra.go.tz/uploads/text-editor/files/Communication%20statistics%20report%20for%20quarter%20one%20ending%20September%202025\\_1760792820.pdf](https://www.tcra.go.tz/uploads/text-editor/files/Communication%20statistics%20report%20for%20quarter%20one%20ending%20September%202025_1760792820.pdf) (accessed on 14 December 2025).

12. Paradigm Initiative 'Press statement: Tanzania's Internet Blackout and Ongoing X Suspension Cost Over US \$238 Million, Paradigm Initiative Warns' (2025) <https://paradigmhq.org/tanzanias-internet-blackout-cost-over-us-238-million/> (accessed on 6 January 2026). Paradigm Initiative

13. CNN "Oh My God, This Is Our Tanzania': Tanzania Police Shooting Protesters & Possible Mass Graves" (2025) <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/11/21/africa/tanzania-police-shooting-protesters-deadly-election-intl-invs> (accessed on 21 November 2025)

recommendations to help Tanzania’s digital space thrive. This report gained insights from desktop research on existing laws, policies, policy briefs, news, other reports and commentaries from different stakeholders.

## **Internet Access and Disruptions**

Mobile network availability (signal presence) is high nationally, with most of the population within range of 2G/3G/4G networks due to extensive infrastructure expansion. 2G covers nearly all areas, while 3G and 4G have reached roughly 93–94% of the population. 5G coverage is emerging, now reaching around 26–29% of the population.<sup>14</sup> Internet subscriptions have grown significantly: by September 2025 there were over 56 million active internet subscriptions, driving overall penetration toward around 80–83% of the population; however DataReportal states that internet penetration stood at 29.1% of

the total population in Tanzania at the end of 2025.<sup>15</sup> Mobile broadband accounts for virtually all internet use (over 99%), as most subscribers connect via smartphones or mobile devices rather than fixed broadband. While national infrastructure statistics show widespread coverage, there remains a clear digital divide between urban and rural areas, especially in terms of actual usage and effective access. Network signals e.g., 3G/4G tends to be more reliably available in urban centers where population density and commercial profit justify investment, while rural areas often have coverage gaps or lower-quality connections. Independent telecom market analysis indicates that providers and policy initiatives are working to extend rural coverage, but gaps persist due to cost and lower demand in sparsely populated regions. Urban areas have significantly higher rates of internet use and ICT ownership compared with rural zones. Based on the 2022 census and ICT data (the most recent demographic breakdown available), approximately 27.3% of urban residents used the internet, compared

14. Extensia.Tech “Tanzania: Telecoms services adoption to increase in the first quarter of 2025/2026” (2025) <https://extensia.tech/tanzania-telecoms-services-adoption-to-increase-in-the-first-quarter-of-2025-2026/> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

15. DataReportal “Digital 2026: Tanzania” (2025) <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2026-tanzania> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

with only about 7.7% of rural residents.<sup>16</sup>

During Tanzania’s October 29 2025 general election, authorities imposed a nationwide internet restriction, severely disrupting mobile data and access to social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp.<sup>17</sup> The shutdown began as polling booths opened and coincided with protests and reports of violence, raising serious concerns about censorship and suppression of information in a critical democratic moment.<sup>18</sup>

Despite widespread mobile network coverage in Tanzania, internet access in 2025 remains constrained by affordability and quality challenges. Mobile data and internet-capable devices remain costly relative to average incomes particularly for rural and low-income households while connection quality is uneven, with urban areas benefiting from faster and more stable services compared to rural regions

that experience slower speeds, congestion, and frequent outages. This disparity between nominal coverage and meaningful connectivity continues to reinforce the urban–rural digital divide.<sup>19</sup>

## Online Freedom of

## Expression and Access

## to Information

In 2025, Tanzania’s legal framework governing online expression remained heavily weighted toward restriction rather than protection, despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression. Laws such as the Cybercrimes Act (2015)<sup>20</sup>, the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations (2020)<sup>21</sup>, the Media Services Act (2016), and Penal Code provisions on sedition and false

16. National Bureau of Statistics and Office of the Chief Government Statistician (OCGS) “Information and Communication Technology Analysis in Tanzania” (2025) <https://www.nbs.go.tz/uploads/statistics/documents/en-1764330874-Information%20and%20Communication%20Technology%20%20Analysis%20%20in%20Tanzania.pdf> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

17. TechCabal “Tanzania restricts internet as citizens vote in general election” (2025) <https://techcabal.com/2025/10/29/tanzania-restricts-internet-as-citizens-vote-in-general-election/> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

18. The Condia “The internet goes slow in Tanzania on election day” (2025) <https://thecondia.com/tanzania-internet-shutdown-election-2025/> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

19. World Bank “Tanzania Digital Economy Diagnostic” (2022) <https://www.worldbank.org> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

20. The Cybercrimes Act, Act No. 14 of 2015 (the Cybercrimes Act).

21. The Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations, 2020 (the Online Content Regulations).

information continue to be used to stifle online speech. These laws contain vague and overly broad provisions particularly those criminalising false, misleading, or offensive information which have been used against journalists, activists and opposition figures for online expression.<sup>22</sup> From an international human rights law perspective, these restrictions fail to meet the requirements of legality, necessity, and proportionality under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)<sup>23</sup> and Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Legal protections for access to information remain weakly implemented in practice. Although Tanzania's Access to Information Act formally guarantees the public's right to seek and receive information held by public bodies, its effectiveness in 2025 was limited.<sup>24</sup> The lack of a fully independent and operational Information Commission continues to undermine enforcement, leaving citizens

without effective remedies when access requests are denied. Civil society organisations report that public authorities frequently rely on broad exemptions related to national security or public order, resulting in limited transparency and inconsistent disclosure practices.<sup>25</sup> These shortcomings fall short of international standards requiring independent oversight, proactive disclosure and effective appeal mechanisms.

Censorship and content removal intensified in 2025, particularly during elections and periods of political tension. Authorities ordered internet shutdowns, platform suspensions and content restrictions affecting social media and online discussion spaces. The Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) also suspended the online platform JamiiForums for 90 days in September 2025, accusing it of publishing content that "misleads the public" and threatens national unity.<sup>26</sup>

Following the blackout, mobile users re-

22. ARTICLE 19 "Tanzania: Laws restricting freedom of expression" (2025.) <https://www.article19.org/region/tanzania/> (accessed on 17 February 2026).

23. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>(accessed on 4 January 2026).

24. The Access to Information Act, Act No. 6 of 2016 (the Access to Information Act).

25. Twaweza "Analysis of the Access to Information Act No. 6 of 2016" (2017) <https://twaweza.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Twaweza-ATI-Act-Analysis-BT130217.pdf> (accessed on 17 February 2026).

26. Human Rights Watch "Tanzania: Deepening Repression Threatens Elections" (2025) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/29/tanzania-deepening-repression-threatens-elections> (accessed on 14 December 2025)

ceived messages warning that sharing images or videos deemed inflammatory could lead to treason charges.<sup>27</sup> Rights groups and civil society organisations strongly condemned these measures, arguing that the internet restrictions undermined freedom of expression, restricted media reporting, and violated citizens' rights during a key moment for political participation.<sup>28</sup>

Regulatory directives were issued to major platforms such as Meta, to restrict or remove content deemed unlawful under domestic legislation. Renown activist Mange Kimambi<sup>29</sup> Maria Sarungi Tsehai's Meta accounts faced restrictions. Kimambi's Instagram accounts were removed, citing "recidivism" and repeated violations of its community standards, while Maria Sarungi Tsehai's Instagram page was geo-restricted inside Tanzania after what Meta described as a "legal order from Tanzanian regulators."<sup>30</sup>

Several key Tanzania figures were arrested pre- and post-election for content shared on digital platforms. On April 9 2025, prominent opposition leader Tundu Lissu, chairman of the main opposition party, Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA), which translates from Swahili to "the Party for Democracy and Progress", was arrested and charged with treason and related offences, including for public statements and actions calling for electoral reform that were widely disseminated online and offline.<sup>31</sup>

Businesswoman and social media influencer Jennifer Bilikwija Jovin, popularly known as Niffer, was arrested in late October 2025 and charged with treason in connection with protests surrounding the October 29 2025 general election. Prosecutors alleged she and 239 other people were involved in actions linked to election-day unrest and in a related treason

27. Africanews "Tanzania partially restores internet access, warns against image sharing" (2025) <https://www.africanews.com/2025/11/04/tanzania-partially-restores-internet-access-warns-against-image-sharing/> (accessed on 14 December 2025)

28. CADE Project "Digital rights groups urge Tanzania to guarantee online freedoms ahead of general election" (2025) <https://cadeproject.org/updates/digital-rights-groups-urge-tanzania-to-guarantee-online-freedoms-ahead-of-general-election/> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

29. BBC News "Meta restricts Tanzanian activist accounts after government request" (2025) <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwyv7ggqjpo> (accessed on 10 December 2025).

30. The Africa Report "Tanzania crackdown goes digital: Meta blocks two leading activists" (2025) <https://www.theafricareport.com/401302/tanzania-crackdown-goes-digital-meta-blocks-two-leading-activists/> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

31. BBC News "Tanzania's opposition leader charged with treason" (2025) <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c98g-g7172ymo> (accessed on 10 November 2025).

case she faced distinct charges allegedly tied to her conduct prior to the elections.<sup>32</sup> Amani Golugwa, the deputy secretary-general of CHADEMA, was arrested in early November 2025 as part of a wider crackdown and charged, along with hundreds of others, for alleged involvement in protests that followed the disputed election. Authorities framed these in part as treason cases linked to incitement and coordination.<sup>33</sup> By November 26 2025, the Director of Public Prosecutions had withdrawn treason charges against 220 youths arrested after the general election unrest, although treason prosecutions continued for Jenifer “Niffer” Jovin and another suspect.<sup>34</sup> This arrest over youth’s right to protest unfair elections and share on digital platforms, what happened on October 29 2025, shows a declining rate of freedom of speech and that citizens get punished for it.

## Gendered

## Disinformation

In Tanzania, women and girls in public life including women politicians, journalists and human rights defenders (HRDs) are disproportionately affected by gendered disinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). Online threats, misinformation and hate campaigns target women on the basis of gender and political identity, undermining their credibility, deterring participation, and amplifying stigma. TFGBV has been recognised as a growing digital threat in Tanzania, with abuses such as hate speech, threats and coordinated disinformation campaigns often aimed at silencing and discrediting women in political and civic roles, particularly during election cycles and periods of heightened political tension.<sup>35</sup> Gendered online abuse

32. The Citizen “Niffer, 21 others charged with treason and related offences” (2025) <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/niffer-21-others-charged-with-treason-and-related-offenses-5256794> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

33. France 24 “Tanzania arrests senior opposition figure as hundreds face treason charges” (2025) <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20251108-tanzanian-police-arrest-top-opposition-official-hundreds-charged-with-treason> (accessed on 14 December 2025)

34. The Chanzo. (2025, November 26). DPP withdraws treason cases against another 220 linked to election unrest. <https://thechanzo.com/2025/11/26/dpp-withdraws-treason-cases-against-another-220-linked-to-election-unrest/>

35. Zaina Foundation. (2025). TFGBV: Technology-facilitated gender-based violence in Tanzania — a growing digital threat. <https://zainafoundationtz.org/tfgbv-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-in-tanzania-a-growing-digital-threat/>

in Tanzania includes hate speech, cyberstalking, coordinated trolling, non-consensual sharing of intimate content, and deepfake pornography, all aimed at intimidating, shaming, or discrediting female public figures and HRDs. Despite the growing recognition of TFGBV in Tanzania, including through national dialogues on technology-facilitated violence and GBV during elections, policy responses remain nascent and uneven.<sup>33</sup> Initiatives such as integrating digital safety and GBV prevention into the National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children (2025–2029) was officially launched in May 2024 and represent important steps toward addressing online gendered violence and strengthening coordination across media, tech, and legal stakeholders.<sup>36</sup> Tanzanian activist and media figure Maria Sarungi Tsehai has been a vocal advocate for social change and media freedom. In January 2025, she was reportedly abducted by armed men in Nairobi, Kenya, an incident linked in local reporting to her activism. This episode reflects risks faced by outspoken activists

in the region and contributes to an atmosphere where threats against HRDs and online critics are taken seriously.<sup>37</sup>

## Data Protection and

## Cybersecurity

In 2025, Tanzania saw significant developments in data privacy and protection, particularly through the enforcement actions of its Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) under the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA), Act No. 11 of 2022. One major event was the extension of the registration deadline for all public and private data-handling institutions to April 30 2025, after which non-compliant organisations risked legal penalties. PDPC Director General Mkilia stated that enforcement would begin from May 2025.<sup>38</sup>

In 2025, the PDPC began building institutional capacity. In July 2025, it held a three-day training for Data Protection Officers (DPOs), covering key topics such

36. National Dialogue on Technology Facilitated Violence. (2025). Concept Note 2025. Women in Law and Development in Africa Tanzania. <https://wildaftanzania.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/National-Dialogue-Concept-Note-2025.pdf>

37. Maria Sarungi Tsehai (n.d.) In Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria\\_Sarungi\\_Tsehai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Sarungi_Tsehai) (accessed on 5 January, 2026).

38. Africa-Press “PDPC extends registration deadline” (2025) <https://www.africa-press.net/tanzania/all-news/pdpc-extends-registration-deadline> (accessed on 15 December 2025).

as Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), cross-border data flow permits and compliance report preparation.<sup>39</sup> Later, in August 2025 the PDPC convened another DPO training session to further strengthen data protection capacity across institutions. 29 A landmark ruling also marked Tanzania’s data privacy landscape, when in August 2025, the PDPC issued its first-ever decision on a complaint involving a child’s image. The commission found that posting a newborn’s photo on Instagram without parental consent constituted unlawful processing of sensitive personal data. It fined the data controller, ordered deletion of the image and awarded compensation of TZS 20,000,000 (approximately US\$7800) to the complainant.<sup>40</sup>

Beyond enforcement, Tanzania’s privacy system received international recognition. In June 2025, analysts and technology leaders noted that Tanzania was

making “better and stable systems for personal information protection and internet protection” a sign that data protection was moving from policy into practice.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, legal experts raised concerns over the unlawful repurposing of personal data. According to Clyde & Co (2025), under Section 25 of the PDPA, repurposing data requires new consent unless the use is authorised by law or the data is anonymised. Some data controllers risk heavy fines or even imprisonment if they process personal data beyond its original intended purpose.<sup>42</sup>

## Privacy and

## Surveillance

Tanzania’s surveillance powers are primarily grounded in the Cybercrimes Act (2015), the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regula-

39. Personal Data Protection Commission “Invitation letter: Special training for Data Protection Officers (DPOS) Fourth Batch” (2025) [https://www.pdpc.go.tz/media/filer\\_public/c8/d6/c8d6f071-f7c4-40e2-a9b5c4dedbceb5f5/invitation\\_letter\\_special\\_training\\_dpos\\_fourth\\_batch.pdf](https://www.pdpc.go.tz/media/filer_public/c8/d6/c8d6f071-f7c4-40e2-a9b5c4dedbceb5f5/invitation_letter_special_training_dpos_fourth_batch.pdf) (accessed on 14 December 2025).
40. Fin & Law “The Tanzania Personal Data Protection Commission issues its decision on protection of child’s data” (2025) <https://finandlaw.co.tz/2025/08/20/the-tanzania-personal-data-protection-commission-issues-its-decision-on-protection-of-childs-data/> (accessed on 10 December 2025).
41. IPP Media/ The Guardian “Tanzania recognized for advancing personal data and internet protection systems” (2025) <https://www.africa-press.net/tanzania/all-news/pdpc-extends-registration-deadline> (accessed on 10 December 2025).
42. Clyde & Co LLP “Protection of Personal Data in Tanzania: Addressing the Unlawful Repurposing of Personal Data” (2025) <https://www.clydeco.com/en/insights/2025/11/protection-of-personal-data-in-tanzania-addressing> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

tions Act (2020), which allow authorities to access communications data and order monitoring or takedowns on broad grounds such as national security or public order. The laws authorising surveillance lack clear thresholds for necessity and proportionality and do not consistently require prior judicial authorisation. As a result, surveillance powers are broad, discretionary and insufficiently constrained by human rights safeguards.

Although the government has not publicly confirmed procurement of advanced mass surveillance tools, there are persistent concerns that authorities monitor digital communications, particularly during elections and protests<sup>43</sup>. In 2025, nationwide internet restrictions and platform blocking during the general election indicated extensive state capacity to control and observe online activity. Civil society groups reported monitoring of WhatsApp groups and social media platforms used for mobilisation, leading to arrests<sup>44</sup>.

Tanzania continues to rely on biometric systems, including biometric national identification (IDs), Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card registration and biometric voter registration, all of which collect fingerprints and other sensitive personal data. While these systems are justified for administrative and electoral purposes, safeguards on data retention, sharing and secondary use remain unclear. There is no public confirmation of live facial recognition technology in public spaces as of 2025, but the lack of explicit legal limits on biometric expansion raises concerns. Weak enforcement of data protection laws heightens risks to privacy and non-discrimination.

In 2025, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) ordered content restrictions and platform suspensions during the election period, including blocking access to X (formerly Twitter).<sup>45</sup> Meta's transparency reports for 2025 notes that by June 2025 The Tanzanian Government had requested an emergency disclosure of an account indicating

43. CIPESA, *State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2024: Africa's Electoral Democracy and Technology – Pitfalls and Promises* (accessed on 6 November 2025), [https://cipesa.org/wp-content/files/reports/State\\_of\\_Internet\\_Freedom\\_in\\_Africa\\_Report\\_2024.pdf](https://cipesa.org/wp-content/files/reports/State_of_Internet_Freedom_in_Africa_Report_2024.pdf)

44. Human Rights Watch, *Tanzania: Repressive Cybercrime Law Used to Silence Critics* (accessed on 6 November 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/30/tanzania-repressive-cybercrime-law-used-silence-critics>

45. BBC News "Tanzania blocks access to X after government says hackers targeted accounts" (2025) <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgmjdrkz1o> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

there need to surveil content and the creators.<sup>46</sup> The exact number of takedown requests is not publicly disclosed by authorities, limiting accountability. These actions are typically carried out without judicial oversight or public explanation, falling short of rights-respecting standards. Oversight of surveillance in Tanzania remains weak in 2025. While the Personal Data Protection Commission exists in law, it lacks full independence and operational capacity. Surveillance and content-restriction decisions are largely executed by executive and regulatory bodies without mandatory judicial review. Parliamentary oversight of intelligence and surveillance activities is minimal, and affected individuals have limited access to remedies or appeals, resulting in low transparency and accountability.

## Developments in

## ICT and Emerging

## Technologies

In 2025, Tanzania made several significant advances in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, underpinned by policy, innovation and stakeholder engagement. First, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supported a national AI Readiness Assessment through multi-stakeholder consultations in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar, culminating in a report presented at the Africa Internet Governance Forum in May.<sup>47</sup> This laid the foundation for Tanzania’s emerging national AI strategy. By September, the government unveiled draft national AI guidelines and announced plans to establish a National Institute for Digital and AI Technologies in Dodoma, aimed at building capacity in machine learning, deep learning and responsible AI.<sup>48</sup>

46. Meta Transparency “Government Data Requests: Tanzania” (2025 <https://transparency.meta.com/reports/government-data-requests/country/TZ/> (accessed on 17 february 2026).

47. The Citizen “Tanzania to host inaugural AI forum to drive inclusive innovation” (2025) <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tanzania-to-host-inaugural-ai-forum-to-drive-inclusive-innovation-5089014> (accessed on 14 December 2025)

48. Tech & Media Convergency / UNESCO IPDC “Launch of the UNESCO IPDC Supported Tanzania Media and AI Report” (2025) <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/launch-unesco-ipdc-supported-tanzania-media-and-ai-report>(accessed on 10 December 2025)

In the media, the AI for Media Development (AI4MD) initiative organised by Tech and Media Convergence and supported by UNESCO, released a report documenting growing AI adoption in journalism.<sup>49</sup> The report highlights how journalists are increasingly using AI tools for writing, fact-checking, translation and trend monitoring, but also warns of low overall awareness and the need for capacity building. Tanzania is also integrating AI into its healthcare system, for example, the Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute announced that it is deploying AI-powered medical equipment to improve diagnostic capacity and patient flow, making services more efficient and responsive.<sup>50</sup> Finally, on the regulatory front, Tanzania's Ministry of Communication and Information Technology published Ethical Guidelines for AI use, reflecting a commitment to align AI development with national values, data governance, and human rights.<sup>51</sup>

## Digital Inclusion

In 2025, Tanzania made significant strides in digital inclusion, driven by both infrastructure development and capacity building. Internet subscriptions surged to 56.3 million by September 2025, raising internet penetration to 82.6%, largely due to expanded mobile broadband coverage with 4G and emerging 5G networks.<sup>52</sup> DataReportal estimates that internet penetration in Tanzania stood at 29.1% of the total population at the end of 2025, reflecting the proportion of individuals who actually use the internet<sup>53</sup>. In contrast, figures cited by the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), which are based on active internet subscriptions linked to SIM card registrations rather than unique users, report penetration rates of approximately 82.6%<sup>54</sup>, illustrating how subscription-based measurements can

49. UNESCO "AI ready and responsible: Tanzania unveils national assessment at Africa Internet Governance Forum" (2025) <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-ready-and-responsible-tanzania-unveils-national-assessment-africa-internet-governance-forum> (accessed on 10 December 2025).

50. The Respondent Online "Tanzania turns to artificial intelligence to improve healthcare delivery" (2025) <https://www.therespondents.co.tz/2025/09/tanzania-turns-to-artificial.html> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

51. Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MICIT) "Guidelines for the Secure and Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in Tanzania" (2024) <https://www.mawasiliano.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw-1749982790-Guidelines%20for%20AI%20ethical%20USE%20Guideline%20MICIT%202025ver.pdf> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

52. Business Insider Tanzania "Tanzania's digital boom: Internet and mobile services soar" (2025) <https://businessinsider.co.tz/tanzanias-digital-boom-internet-and-mobile-services-soar/> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

53. DataReportal "Digital 2026: Tanzania" (2025) <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2026-tanzania> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

54. Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority "Communication Statistics Report for the Quarter Ending September 2025" (2025) [https://www.tcra.go.tz/uploads/text-editor/files/Communication%20statistics%20report%20for%20quarter%20one%20ending%20September%202025\\_1760792820.pdf](https://www.tcra.go.tz/uploads/text-editor/files/Communication%20statistics%20report%20for%20quarter%20one%20ending%20September%202025_1760792820.pdf) (accessed on 14 December 2025).

significantly overstate individual internet access. At the same time, the cost of internet access became more affordable, a change credited to government investments and regulatory efforts, which particularly benefited women and rural populations.<sup>55</sup>

On the governance side, Tanzania hosted the 14th Africa Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF) in May 2025, bringing together over 1,000 delegates from across Africa to shape inclusive digital policy and push for equitable, community-led internet governance.<sup>56</sup> In parallel, the National AI Readiness Assessment, conducted in collaboration with UNESCO, outlined a path toward an ethical and inclusive AI strategy aligned with development goals.<sup>57</sup>

Tanzania has adopted several legal and policy measures relevant to children's online safety, primarily through the Cybercrimes Act (2015)<sup>58</sup>, the Electronic and

Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations (2020), and the Law of the Child Act<sup>59</sup>, which collectively criminalise online child sexual abuse material (CSAM), exploitation, and harmful online content.<sup>123</sup> These laws provide a general framework for protecting children online, including obligations on service providers to restrict prohibited content and cooperate with authorities. However, Tanzania lacks a comprehensive, child-specific digital safety law addressing emerging online risks such as cyberbullying, online grooming, algorithmic harms and data protection for children.<sup>4</sup> In practice, enforcement focuses more on criminal punishment than on prevention, digital literacy or child-centred remedies, limiting alignment with international standards such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comment No. 25 on children's rights in the digital environment.<sup>5</sup>

In 2025, persons with disabilities in Tanzania continue to face significant barriers

55. IPP Media / The Guardian "Tanzania among leading countries with affordable internet access" (2025) <https://ippmedia.co.tz/the-guardian/business/read/tanzania-among-leading-countries-with-affordable-internet-access-2025-05-09-124946/> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

56. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa "Tanzania hosts continental push for inclusive internet governance" (2025) <https://uneca.org/stories/tanzania-hosts-continental-push-for-inclusive-internet-governance> (accessed on 14 December 2025)

57. UNESCO "AI Ready and Responsible: Tanzania unveils national assessment at Africa Internet Governance Forum" (2025) <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-ready-and-responsible-tanzania-unveils-national-assessment-africa-internet-governance-forum> (accessed on 14 December 2025).

58. The Cybercrimes Act, Act No. 14 of 2015 (the Cybercrimes Act).

59. The Law of the Child Act, Act No. 21 of 2009 (the Law of the Child Act).

to meaningful digital access despite existing legal protections. The Persons with Disabilities Act (2010) and the National ICT Policy recognize the rights of PWDs to access information and communication technologies, but implementation remains uneven, with limited enforcement of accessibility standards for websites, mobile applications, and digital public services.<sup>60</sup> Low levels of targeted digital literacy programs for PWDs further exacerbate exclusion, undermining compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), particularly Articles 9 and 21 on accessibility and access to information.<sup>61</sup>

## Universal Service

### Fund (USF)

Based on the Universal Communications Service Access Fund, UCSAF's official 2025 project reports, Tanzania's Universal Communications Service Access Fund has supported a large-scale expansion

of telecommunications infrastructure during the year. By early 2025, UCSAF had contracted the construction of 2,143 communication towers nationwide, targeting 1,974 wards and more than 5,100 villages, with the aim of extending services to over 23 million people. Of these, approximately 1,754 towers were already completed and operational by January 2025, while the remainder were under construction. A major component of this rollout is the 758-tower project under the Digital Tanzania Project, which by mid-2025 was reported to be over 90 percent complete, with more than 680 towers finished across multiple regions, mainly in rural and previously unserved areas.<sup>62</sup> In addition, UCSAF initiated new deployment phases in late 2025, including plans for around 280 additional towers in strategic and border areas, indicating continued expansion beyond the main rollout.<sup>63</sup> This is great progress in connecting more communities that are often marginalised and shows growth in terms of coverage and a significant growth compared to previous years.

60. The National Information and Communications Technology Policy of 2016 (the National ICT Policy).

61. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

62. IPP Media / The Guardian "UCSAF: 90 pc of 758 recent telecom towers completed" (2025) <https://www.ippmedia.com/the-guardian/news/local-news/read/ucsaf-90pc-of-758-recent-telecom-towers-completed-2025-05-27-110231/> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

63. Universal Communications Service Access Fund (UCSAF) "Taarifa ya Miradi ya UCSAF" (2025) <http://ucsaf.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw-1755174497-TAARIFA%20YA%20MIRADI%20YA%20UCSAF.pdf> (accessed on 5 January 2026).

## Conclusion

The 2025 internet shutdown and the repression of digital rights in Tanzania represent a serious erosion of democratic norms, transparency in governance and fundamental freedoms. The national blackout, which lasted for several days during the contested general election, significantly undermined electoral integrity, access to information and civic participation<sup>64</sup>. Civil society organisations documented widespread human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests, media suppression, and violence against civilians and journalists during and after the elections (LHRC et al., 2025; HRW, 2025). The shutdown not only disrupted communication but also blocked civil society and citizens from reporting and verifying human rights violations<sup>65</sup>. Regrettably, the government's robust deployment of regulatory power also involved amending online-content rules (TCRA, 2025), raising concerns about entrenched censor-

ship and centralised control over digital platforms. Below are some recommendations made for the government, private sector and civil society.

64. Paradigm Initiative 'Press statement: Tanzania's Internet Blackout and Ongoing X Suspension Cost Over US \$238 Million, Paradigm Initiative Warns' (2025) <https://paradigmhq.org/tanzanias-internet-blackout-cost-over-us-238-million/> (accessed on 6 January 2026). Paradigm Initiative

65. CIPESA, Tanzania's Internet Disruption Undermines Electoral Integrity and Imperils Livelihoods (accessed on 6 November 2025), <https://cipesa.org/2025/10/tanzanias-internet-disruption-undermines-electoral-integrity-and-imperils-livelihoods/>

## Recommendations

### The Government should:

- Fully operationalise and enforce a comprehensive data protection framework, including independent oversight and clear safeguards on surveillance, in line with international human rights standards.
- Review, amend, or repeal laws that unduly restrict online expression, including provisions on false information, sedition and cyber-crime and ensure judicial oversight of content takedowns and internet restrictions.
- Ensure Universal Communications Service Access Fund (UCSAF) resources are used transparently to bridge the digital divide, with greater focus on affordability, accessibility for persons with disabilities, gender inclusion and digital literacy.
- Strengthen access to information through an independent and effective Information Commission and proactive disclosure of public-interest data, including surveillance practices and USF expenditures.

### The Media should:

- Raise public awareness on digital rights, including privacy, freedom of expression, online safety and protection from disinformation.
- Strengthen investigative and public-interest reporting on digital governance, elections, surveillance and internet shutdowns.
- Promote gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive and ethical reporting practices, particularly when covering online abuse and political discourse.

### Civil Society Organisations should:

- Monitor and document digital rights violations, including censorship, surveillance, gendered disinformation and election-related restrictions.
- Conduct capacity-building training with the judiciary, law enforcement and security agencies to strengthen understanding of digital rights and international human rights standards.
- Expand digital literacy, online safety and rights awareness programmes targeting women, youth, persons with disabilities and rural communities.
- Pursue strategic litigation and policy advocacy to advance rights-respecting digital governance and accountability.







### The private sector should:











- Strengthen data protection and cybersecurity safeguards, ensuring robust protection of users' personal data, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women.
- Invest in digital inclusion initiatives such as affordable access, accessible technologies for persons with disabilities, and programmes that expand meaningful connectivity in rural and underserved communities.
- Adopt and implement human rights-based policies and due diligence frameworks in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, ensuring that products and services do not facilitate censorship, unlawful surveillance, or discrimination.
- Increase transparency in content moderation, data requests, and service disruptions, including publishing regular transparency reports detailing government requests and company responses.






# The Score Index



Tanzania, 2025

1 = Totally non-compliant; 2 = Mildly compliant; 3 = Moderately compliant;  
4 = Considerably compliant; 5 = Fully compliant

| Indicator  | ACHPR Principle | 2024 Score  | 2025 Score  | 2025 Justification  |
|--|-----------------|---|---|---|
| Internet Shutdowns   | P38(2)          |  |  | X was restricted,internet was shut down during the election and after   |
| Inexistent laws, policies and other measures to promote universal, equitable, affordable and meaningful access to the internet | P37             |  |  | There are some parts in existing laws that push for equity and affordable internet such as the Access to Information Act and also the Tanzania Digital Economy Strategy 2024–2034, the Electronic and postal communications act(2010) that promotes expansion of communication services by establishing UCSAF. However given 2025 complete internet shutdown during election,this in essence doesn't translate to practice. |
| False News Criminalisation   | P22(2)          |  |  | Although not labeled as false news arrests were made in connection with political expression and online communications  |

| Indicator   | ACHPR Principle | 2024 Score  | 2025 Score  | 2025 Justification  |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|
| Sedition Legislation  | P22(2)          |  1   |  1   | The Media Service Act and the Cyber-crime Act criminalise “sedition” and in 2025 major opposition and critics were charged for treason.   |
| Arbitrary Arrests and Harassments of the Media, HRDs and Citizens                     | P20(1) & (2)    |  1   |  1   | Over 1,700 arrests, while at least 10 protest-related deaths were confirmed by the UN, with civil society and opposition groups alleging significantly higher but unverified fatality figures amid the internet shutdown.                                       |
| Data Protection Legislation.  | P42             |  3 |  4 | Progress was made including the commencement of registration of data controllers and processors, and the rollout of capacity-building and training programmes for public and private sector stakeholders. Still more work needed since law needs reviewing      |
| States interfere and require the removal of online content by internet intermediaries | P38 and P39(4)  |  2 |  2 | Media houses have been banned arbitrarily for content they share. Government made requests to some notable Social media including meta to block/ limit the visibility of activist accounts  |
| Invasion of Privacy of  | P41             |  2 |  2 | Laws such as PDPA exist but there is limited compliance, although the commission has done some capacity building to key stakeholders in 2025. Other laws such as Cybercrime act allow for invasion of privacy for national security concerns or investigations. |

| Indicator   | ACHPR Principle | 2024 Score  | 2025 Score  | 2025 Justification   |
|---|-----------------|---|---|--|
| Failure by the government to proactively disclose and disseminate information digital technologies. | P29(3)          |    |    | The government uses online media to communicate with citizens such as social media and websites which are often updated in both languages. The UCSAF website shares regular updates as well as TCRA quarterly updates available in Kiswahili language making it more accessible to the public.   |
| AI and Emerging Technologies national strategies  | P39(6)          |   |   | A Strategy for the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in Tanzania has been drafted, stakeholders have inputted   |
| Children rights online  |                 |  |  | The Law of the Child Act enforces general protection of children, while the Cybercrime Act, the electronics and postal communication Act address areas around child pornography and cyberbullying. In its August 2025 decision, the Tanzania Personal Data Protection Commission ruled that a child's photograph constitutes sensitive personal data and that using or sharing it for commercial purposes without parental consent is unlawful under the Personal Data Protection Act. |

| Indicator          | ACHPR Principle | 2024 Score   | 2025 Score   | 2025 Justification  |
|--------------------|-----------------|--|--|---|
| Digital Inclusion  | P37(3)          |  <p>4</p>   |  <p>3</p> | UCSAF ongoing efforts for connectivity including the additional towers it has built in 2025 |
| Total (out of 60): | 2024:<br>27     | <div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 20px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>2025</b></p> <p><b>26</b></p> </div> |  |   |



374 Borno Way, Yaba 101245, Lagos, Nigeria.  
[www.paradigmhq.org](http://www.paradigmhq.org)