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DIGITAL RIGHTS AND INCLUSION IN AFRICA REPORT



ANGOLA

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Angola

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Digital rights and freedoms are fundamental human rights. The Angola country report used desk review and key informant interviews to delve into the country's most pressing digital rights issues: Digital inclusion, development in ICT and emerging technologies, data protection and cyber security and the Universal Service and Access Funds. The research found that there has been a noticeable increase from 2022 in internet penetration and mobile technology usage in Angola. At the same time, the accelerated promotion of digital platforms for financial transactions and efforts to increase broadband have contributed significantly to improved infrastructure and digital inclusion. Despite the advancements, the high inflation rates have resulted in prohibitive data costs, poor infrastructure, and ambiguity in managing the Universal Service and Access Funds, which limit the full enjoyment of digital rights. The report recommends regular assessment and monitoring of digital inclusion initiatives to identify areas for improvement, including gathering data on internet penetration, developing digital skills, and assessing the impact of various programs on communities. It is also recommended that digital content and services be made accessible to people with disabilities

and that special attention is given to collaboration between the government, private sector, educational institutions, and the community.

Introduction

Angola is a Portuguese-speaking Southern African country with borders with Namibia, Zambia, Botswana and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and a population of 33,08 million based on 2022 statistics.¹ Since attaining independence in 1979, Angola has been ruled by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), with Joao Lourenco as the current President.² Oil is the country's major contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), resulting in a high poverty rate due to fluctuating oil prices.³ The Freedom on the Net 2023 report by Freedom House rated Angola as partly free with a score of 61 over 100, with 0 being the least free and 100 the freest. In 2023, Angola witnessed an increase in internet penetration by 3,1% from 2022.⁴ The country's biggest mobile network, Unitel, expanded its 4G network to more than 80% of the country while 5G services became available in major cities, including Luanda and Benguela.⁵ During the same year, Conecta Angola was launched to link high-population areas to internet access points in every province.⁶ The expansion of internet services was enabled by the commercialisation of Angola's communication satellite, Angosat 2.⁷ The country also received an investment from the China Export and Import Bank to expand its broadband project.⁸ In addition, the government announced the development of a National Cybersecurity Strategy and the establishment of a Cybersecurity School.⁹ Despite the progress made over the year, inflation witnessed due to drops in fuel prices and debt repayment¹⁰ increased data and ICT costs affecting access. In addition, unreliable electricity, particularly in rural communities, affects access to the Internet and mobile technologies.¹¹ The government's continued ownership of Unitel and Angola Telecom¹² creates a monopoly in the sector. Unclear use of the Universal Service and Access Funds has also led to growing questions about the fund's objectives.¹³

1 The World Bank, Angola Overview <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/angola/overview>

2 As above.

3 As above.

4 Simon Kemp, "Digital 2023: Angola," DataReportal, February 13, 2023, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-angola>

5 Myles, , "Angola: Unitel accelerates the extension of the coverage of its telecommunications network," Extensia, December 13, 2023 <https://extensia-ltd.com/2023/12/13/angola-unitel-accelerates-the-extension-of-the-coverage-of-its-telecoms-network/>

6 Jornal de Angola, "Conecta Angola prevê internet para mais de 30 mil cidadãos," January 27, 2024 <https://www.jornaldeangola.ao/ao/noticias/conecta-angola-preve-internet-para-mais-de-30-mil-cidadaos/>

7 Simon Kemp, "Digital 2023 Angola," February 13, 2023 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-angola>

8 Angola Press Agency, "Angola: China grants USD249 million loan for Broadband Project in Angola," January 1, 2023 <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301120264.html>

9 Lusa/Verangola, , "Angola is preparing a National Cybersecurity Strategy against Cyber Attacks," May 10, 2023 <https://www.verangola.net/va/en/052023/Telecommunications/35500/Angola-is-preparing-a-National-Cybersecurity-Strategy-against-cyberattacks.htm>

10 The World Bank, Angola Overview <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/angola/overview>

11 Freedom on the Net (2023)

12 JF Sebastião TV CABO and UNITEL among the companies to be privatized in 2023, 04May 2023 <https://www.menosfios.com/en/tv-cabo-e-unitel-entre-as-empresas-a-privatizar-em-2023/>

13 Jornal de Angola, "Fundo sem visibilidade é pago pelos operadores" 08 October 2010, <https://www.jornaldeangola.ao/ao/noticias/fundo-sem-visibilidade-e-pago-pelos-operadores/>

► Country Analysis

Internet access and digital inclusion

Digital inclusion refers to the efforts and initiatives to provide equal access to digital technologies and resources for all individuals in the country, regardless of their socioeconomic status, geographic location, or other potential barriers. In 2023, Angola made reasonable strides in expanding its digital infrastructure, including developing telecommunications and internet connectivity. 2023 witnessed a substantial increase in internet and mobile use in Angola. A total of 11,78 million internet users were recorded at the start of 2023 with 32,6% penetration, marking a 3,1% increase in internet users from 2022 to 2023.¹⁴ In addition, 3,7 million social media users were recorded, representing 10,2% of the total population and 20,11 million active cellular mobile connections, representing 55,7%.¹⁵ During the period under review, the largest phone company, Unitel, reported an increase in 4G LTE coverage to 126 municipalities, 167 rural communes and 17 other localities, representing 76,8% of Angola's 164 municipalities and 30,8% of the country's 542 communes.¹⁶ Unitel also reported the availability of 5G network in eight municipalities in Luanda, two in Benguela and one in Huambo.¹⁷ In 2023, Unitel opened the North Submarine Cable, which connects Cabinda and Zaire provinces and improves internet connectivity.¹⁸

Promoting digital literacy is essential for ensuring that all individuals can effectively use digital technologies. Educational programs and training initiatives can empower people with the necessary skills to navigate the digital landscape, access information, and use online services. The government of Angola initiated a strategic plan which was under consultation focusing on the development of digital skills, expansion of digital literacy for both students and teachers, equipping primary and secondary schools with computers and the Internet and creating a virtual university.¹⁹

The continued development of digital financial services contributed to financial inclusion. Encouraging mobile banking and digital payment systems can bring financial services to previously underserved populations. The country witnessed the proliferation and expansion of e-services to boost the digital economy. Empresa Interbancária de Serviços and Mastercard developed a co-branded contactless card for cross-border payments, particularly for business people.²⁰ In addition, the United States Government Agency for International Development (USAID) and a phone company, Africell, initiated a project 'Digital Money is Better' meant to expand the use of mobile applications.²¹ Similarly, Angola's National Bank (BNA) and the UNDP jointly convened a workshop to promote digital inclusion in micro-business.²² These partnerships demonstrate the

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14 Simon Kemp, "Digital 2023: Angola," DataReportal, February 13, 2023, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-angola>

15 As above

16 Myles, , "Angola: Unitel accelerates the extension of the coverage of its telecommunications network," Extensia, December 13, 2023 <https://extensia-ltd.com/2023/12/13/angola-unitel-accelerates-the-extension-of-the-coverage-of-its-telecoms-network/>

17 As above

18 Winston Qiu, "Unitel lands 2 Africa Subsea Cable in Angola," August 3, 2023 <https://www.submarinenetworks.com/en/systems/asia-europe-africa/2africa/unitel-lands-2africa-subsea-cable-in-angola>

19 Angola Press Agency, "Angola Long term strategy foresees greater inclusive digital education," June 8, 2023 <https://allafrica.com/stories/202306090261.html>

20 Vaughan O'Grady, "Digital Transformation Initiatives on the way in Angola," August 8, 2023 <https://developingtelecoms.com/telecom-technology/customer-management/15344-digital-transformation-initiatives-on-the-way-in-angola.html>

21 As above

22 Angola Press Agency, "Angola: Bna, UNDP Promote Digital Inclusion in Micro-Business," June 4, 2023 <https://allafrica.com/stories/202306060068.html>

importance of international development agencies and the private sector in advancing digital technologies in Angola.

Despite considerable progress in digital inclusion, digital technologies, data protection, and cybersecurity gaps still affect people's digital rights in Angola. Between May and June 2023, the Angolan Kwanza depreciated by 40% against the USD owing to lower oil revenues and larger external debt servicing.²³ The economic crisis faced by Angola in 2023 affected the cost of data information and communication technologies, limiting access to the Internet.²⁴ High prices, lack of internet signal and network instability affect internet and mobile technology access.²⁵ Due to the worsening economic situation, the digital divide could widen based on gendered differences, social stratification and geo-location.

Only 73,7% of the urban population and 7,3% of the rural population in Angola have access to electricity.²⁶ In areas facing electricity challenges, constant power outages affect access to the Internet, further widening the digital divide.²⁷ Resultantly, even in cases where free internet points are provided, limited access to electricity affects access to the Internet. In addition to the challenges relating to the cost of living and electricity outages, it is worth noting that the government of Angola remains the biggest player in the telecommunications industry. Despite commitments to privatise the biggest mobile network provider, UNITEL, which is owned by the State Assets and Participations Management Institute (IGAPE) and the state oil company, Sonangol, the company remains in the hands of the government.²⁸ The state's continued control of the mobile provider compromises digital freedoms and affects fair practice in the broader environment.

The delays in registering Starlink, an alternative internet provider, also limits access for the population. Initial predictions were that Starlink would start operating in the 3rd semester of 2023. However, delays in the regulatory approval from the Angolan Institute of Communications (INACOM) affected the operations.²⁹ The service provider is expected to begin operations in the last trimester of 2024.

Developments in ICT and emerging technologies

Developments in Information and Communication Technology and emerging technologies in Angola were underway in 2023, with the government and private sector trying to harness the potential of new and emerging technologies. Investments have been made to expand and improve the telecommunications infrastructure. During the period under review, the Angola online project, an initiative the government promoted, continued establishing hotspots across the country. Angola-online was established in 2014 to increase access to digital technologies and enhance digital literacy, particularly among traditionally marginalised groups.³⁰ Additionally, 2023 saw the launch of 'Conecta Angola' during the International Forum for Information and Communication Technologies in Angola (ANGOTIC), which aims to establish two access points per province to make internet available in higher population density areas.³¹ The project, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Telecommunications, Information Technologies and Social Communication, established eight

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23 The World Bank, Angola Overview <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/angola/overview>

24 Interview with a Key Informant held in December 2023.

25 Freedom on the Net (2023)

26 Freedom on the Net (2023)

27 As above

28 JF Sebastião TV CABO and UNITEL among the companies to be privatized in 2023, 04May 2023

<https://www.menosfios.com/en/tv-cabo-e-unitel-entre-as-empresas-a-privatizar-em-2023/>

29 Ferreira Manuel Starlink só deverá estar disponível em Angola em 2024 6 November 2023

<https://pti.ao/starlink-so-devera-estar-disponivel-em-angola-em-2024/>

30 Biz Community, "Project 'Angola Online' officially launched," September 13, 2014 <https://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/7/16/118808.html>

31 Jornal de Angola, "Conecta Angola prevê internet para mais de 30 mil cidadãos," January 27, 2024 <https://www.jornaldeangola.ao/ao/noticias/conecta-angola-preve-internet-para-mais-de-30-mil-cidadaos/>

internet kits in 2023 in Belo Horizonte (Bie), Canzar (Lunda Norte), Sombo (Lunda Sul), ITEL (Luanda), Jamba Cueio and Dirico (Quando Cubango) to provide free wireless hotspots.³²

Conecta Angola uses the Angosat 2 satellite.³³ Angosat is a communication satellite launched on October 12, 2022 by the Angolan government, with testing of its telecommunications services conducted in January 2023.³⁴ In 2023, Angosat was commercialised to enable national and international operators to provide telecommunications services and expand access in offline areas while offering competitive prices.³⁵ Investment in expanding broadband networks and deploying affordable and reliable internet services are essential for digital inclusion. The China Export and Import Bank loaned the government of Angola \$249 million for the Broadband Project to support the country in implementing and expanding broadband.³⁶ This project will increase infrastructure, increasing gains across all sectors.

In addition, the government is making inroads to improve access to services provided by public institutions. In 2023, following the 2022 signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Angolan government and a multinational company, Presight, the government announced a US\$89 million investment in an Angolan National Cloud for data storage of government services and information.³⁷ The Cloud aims to ‘foster the digital development of the nation’s economy, improve citizens’ perception of governance and government efficiency, bring citizens closer to government actions, cultivate local talent in the use of information and communication technologies and cloud services, as well as establish a basis for digital transformation across the country’s industry.’³⁸

Data Protection and Cybersecurity

Angola has been enhancing data protection and cybersecurity measures, aligning with global trends to address the challenges posed by the increasing digitalisation of information. The country has enacted data protection legislation to safeguard individuals’ privacy and regulate the processing of personal data. The Constitution of the Republic of Angola protects the Right to Privacy under Article 32. In addition to the constitutional provision, the country enacted other laws governing data protection, including Protection of Personal Data (Law 22/11), Electronic Communications and Information Society Services Law (Law 23/11), Protection of Information Systems and Networks (Law 7/17) and Presidential Decree 214/16 of October 10/16 on rules governing the structure of the regulatory body.³⁹ The Angolan Data Protection Authority (APD) generally oversees and enforces data protection regulations. It is crucial to ensure compliance with data protection laws and promote awareness. The laws include transparency, purpose limitation, data minimisation, accuracy, storage limitation, integrity, and confidentiality. Organisations are expected to adhere to these principles when processing personal data. The Data Protection Law does not contain a mandatory breach notification requirement. However, the Electronic Communication and Information Society Services Law mandates companies offering communication services that are accessible to the public to notify APD and INACOM (the Electronic communications authority) of any intentional or reckless breach of security, including non-authorised access to personal data.⁴⁰

8

32 As above.

33 As above.

34 GGPEN, “Angosat-2 capabilities”, https://ggpen.gov.ao/?page_id=7887

35 Simon Kemp, “Digital 2023 Angola,” February 13, 2023 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-angola>

36 Angola Press Agency, “Angola: China grants USD249 million loan for Broadband Project in Angola,” January 1, 2023 <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301120264.html>

37 360 Mozambique, “Angola: New \$89 M ‘Cloud’ to store and facilitate access to government data and services,” February 17, 2023 <https://360mozambique.com/world/angola/angola-new-89m-cloud-to-store-and-facilitate-access-to-government-data-and-services/>

38 As above

39 Angola Data Protection Overview <https://www.dataguidance.com/notes/angola-data-protection-overview>

40 DLA Piper, “Data Protection Laws of the World Angola,” February 5, 2024 <https://www.dlapiperdataprotection.com/system/>

No major developments occurred regarding the data protection and cybersecurity legislative framework.

At the Forum on Cybersecurity, the Minister of State for Economic Coordination highlighted that Angola was creating a National Cybersecurity Strategy which includes a cybersecurity agency and observatory and establishing a Cybersecurity Academy.⁴¹ Investing in a clear national strategy and equipping people with the necessary skills and knowledge to work in cybersecurity will strengthen the country's overall cybersecurity posture. In addition, the Minister highlighted the need to raise awareness and educate the population about the importance of cybersecurity.⁴² Promoting awareness about cybersecurity best practices and providing training programs to individuals and organisations contributes to building a cyber-resilient society. Capacity-building initiatives are crucial for enhancing the country's overall cybersecurity. The President of Angola reiterated the need for a Cybersecurity Academy in recognition of the pertinence of addressing cybersecurity in the country.⁴³ Organisations in Angola must stay informed about the evolving regulatory landscape, comply with data protection laws, and continually assess and strengthen their cybersecurity measures.

Universal Service and Access Fund (USAF)

Angola established a fund to support the development of communications (FADCOM), with sources of revenue from contributions by operators to the Universal Service and Access Fund (USAF), state appropriations, and donations.⁴⁴ FADCOM was created in 2010 through Presidential Decree 264/10 ideally to contribute towards the expansion of telecommunications networks and ensure universal access through the promotion of telecommunications and information and communication technology (ICT) services.⁴⁵ Typically, the Fund is financed through contributions from the telecommunications service providers operating in the country, which are calculated as a percentage of the providers' revenues and are directed towards the development of universal service projects. As per regulations, the fund receives 1% of annual income from telecommunications companies, yet there is no clarity on how much FADCOM has and how these resources are used.⁴⁶ Assessing and monitoring the Fund is difficult because it needs more transparency and accountability. The Fund's exact amount is unknown as this information is not readily accessible. However, as highlighted in sections on Digital Inclusion of People and Development in ICT and emerging technologies, the government made notable strides to improve access, including continuing with Angola-online, setting up Conecta Angola and investing in the country's national cloud. In January 2022, the government approved the restructuring of public funds, including FADCOM, yet by May 2023, the restructuring process had still not been implemented.⁴⁷ How the USAF will be managed after the restructuring is still unclear. Efforts to get additional information and comments regarding the fund and its operation were fruitless.

modules/za.co.heliosdesign.dla.lotw.data_protection/functions/handbook.pdf?country-1=AO

41 Lusa/Verangola, "Angola is preparing a National Cybersecurity Strategy against Cyber Attacks," May 10, 2023 <https://www.verangola.net/va/en/052023/Telecommunications/35500/Angola-is-preparing-a-National-Cybersecurity-Strategy-against-cyberattacks.htm>

42 As above

43 Africa Indipomacy News, "Angola's President launches Cybersecurity Initiative," June 21, 2023 <https://indiplomacy.com/2023/06/21/angolas-president-launches-cybersecurity-initiative/>

44 UNESCO, "Angola Technology," May 22, 2023 <https://education-profiles.org/sub-saharan-africa/angola/~technology>

45 Jornal de Angola, "Fundo sem visibilidade é pago pelos operadores" 08 October 2010, <https://www.jornaldeangola.ao/ao/noticias/fundo-sem-visibilidade-e-pago-pelos-operadores/>

46 As above.

47 Teresa Gando, "Restruturação dos Fundos Público está a andar muito "devagarinho"" May 12, 2023, <https://expansao.co.ao/empresas/interior/restruturacao-dos-fundos-publico-esta-a-andar-muito-devagarinho-113124.html>

▶ Conclusion & Recommendations

Conclusion

The successful development of ICT in Angola requires continued collaboration between the government, private sector, educational institutions, and the community. Ongoing efforts in these areas contribute to the country's technological advancement and economic development. Fostering digital inclusion in Angola requires a holistic approach that addresses infrastructure, education, accessibility, and collaboration between various stakeholders. As technology advances, efforts to bridge the digital divide will be essential to ensure that all individuals can fully participate in the digital age and enjoy their rights. In light of the findings from the research, the following recommendations are made;

Recommendations

Government

- » Prioritise increasing access to electricity for both urban and rural communities to implement digital inclusion programs effectively.
 - » Partner with the private sector to accelerate digital growth and curb cybersecurity effectively within the confines of human rights. The government should implement measures to safeguard critical assets, including telecommunications networks, energy grids, and financial systems, from cyber threats.
 - » eEnsure that legislation addressing cybercrime is in place to define offences, penalties, and procedures for investigating and prosecuting cybercrime.
 - » Ensure that USAF contributions from service providers are collected, allocated and utilised efficiently in line with universal service and access objectives.
 - » Issue accessible reports to the general public outlining how the USAF resources are distributed and utilised.
 - » Update the Data Protection Law to include a provision which mandates companies to report any data breach within 24 hours.
 - » Prioritise the capacity-building of public officials in digital technologies and cybersecurity.
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Civil society

- » monitor digital inclusion initiatives to ensure greater transparency and accountability from the government, particularly concerning the USAF.
- » Prioritise programming focusing on raising awareness of digital rights and digital inclusion.

Private Sector

- » The private sector should invest in advancing community access to ICTs by expanding broadband access. The private sector, particularly telecommunication companies which contribute to the USAF, should monitor how the resources are used and push for greater transparency and accountability from the government.

Academia

- » There is a need for more research into digital rights in Angola with a deliberate focus on the USAF. Mainly, academics should focus on how the Fund is used and monitored and its effectiveness in bridging the digital gap.
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