

DRIF25 REPORT



About DRIF25

The Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) is an important platform where conversations on digital policy in the Global South are shaped, policy directions debated, and partnerships forged for action. It hosts diverse skills and capacities for enhancing digital rights and inclusion on the African continent and beyond. It is a Paradigm Initiative (PIN) flagship platform for communities of practice around privacy, affordable Internet, increasing women's access to digital tools, Internet shutdowns and similar themes. DRIF has set its tone as the arena for challenging topical global issues around Internet rights in the Global South and consolidating views from civil society, technology companies, government, academia, and other stakeholders.

The 12th edition (DRIF25) streamlined engagements, focusing on specific sub-themes to promote digital rights and inclusion. The 12th edition was hosted under the theme - Promoting Digital Ubuntu in Approaches to Technology, calling for diverse

actors, including governments and private sector actors to be responsible and accountable for digital rights.. DRIF25 served as a platform for awareness raising, spotlighting pressing issues such as existing digital threats, cybersecurity, data governance, platform accountability, the ethical implications of AI, digital public infrastructure and digital inclusion for marginalised groups. The event cultivated partnerships and collaboration across all thematic areas, ensuring that the discussions and recommendations translate into joint initiatives for advancing digital rights advocacy.

What We Set Out To Do

01

To create a platform for digital rights practitioners and stakeholders from the Global Majority to interrogate critical digital rights and inclusion issues, trends and developments and to formulate strategies.



02

To provide digital security to at-risk communities.



03

To increase stakeholder accountability networks to foster collaborations on digital rights and inclusion.



Background

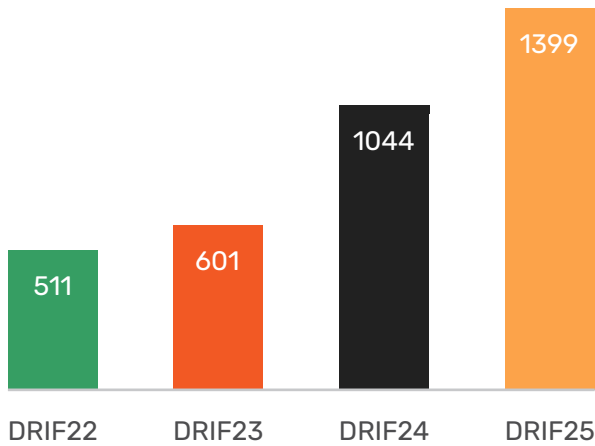
DRIF started as an event organised in Nigeria known as the Internet Freedom Forum (IFF) and transitioned in 2019 to what is now the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF). Significant strides have been made from 53 attendees from one country - Nigeria in 2013, to gathering 623 in-person attendees from 65 countries in 2025. Paradigm Initiative has made significant strides in convening stakeholders across Africa and the

Global South to discuss pertinent digital rights and inclusion issues. In 2023, for the first time, PIN hosted the annual event in Nairobi, Kenya, bringing together 348 delegates. Accra, Ghana, was the host country for DRIF24, bringing together 560 delegates. In 2025, 623 delegates gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, demonstrating exponential growth in the number of delegates interested in DRIF.

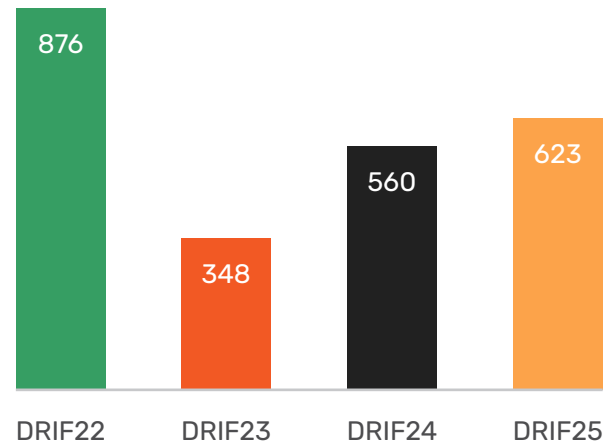


DRIF In Progress

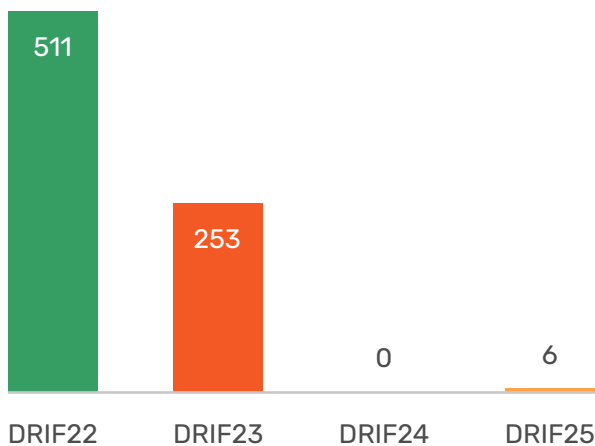
Number of registered attendees:



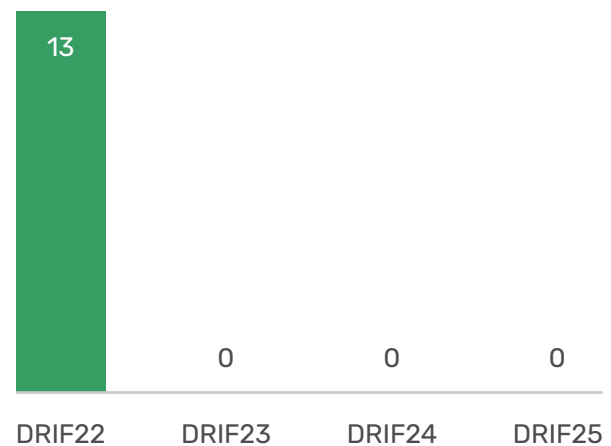
Total number of in-person attendees:



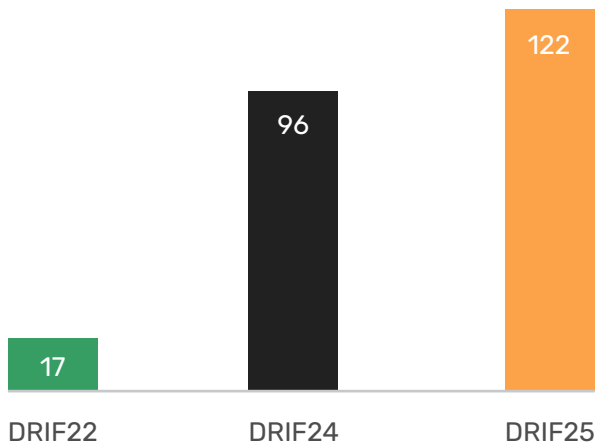
Total number of recorded virtual participants



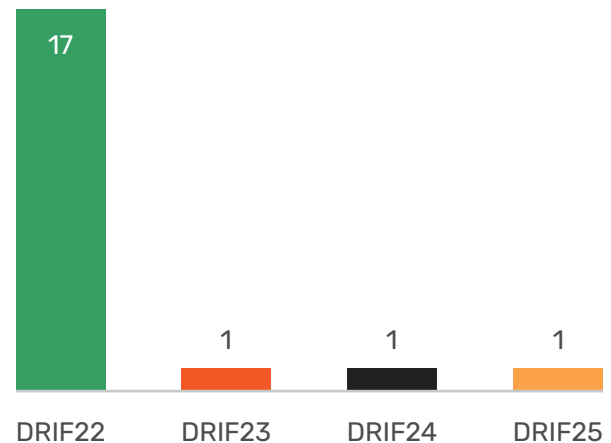
Number of virtual sessions



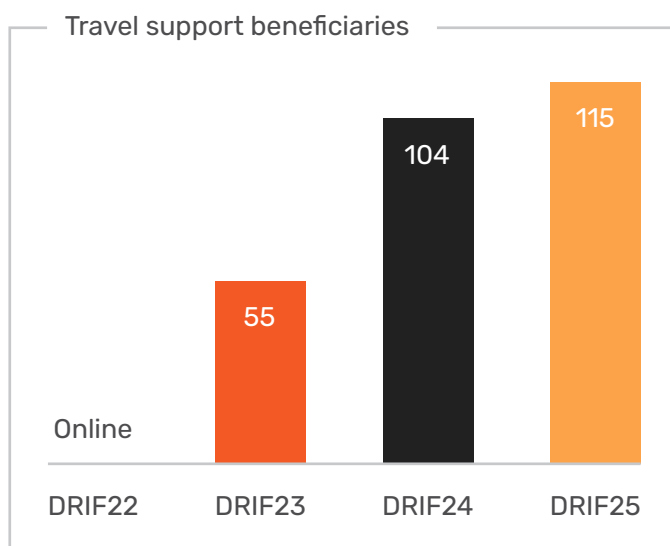
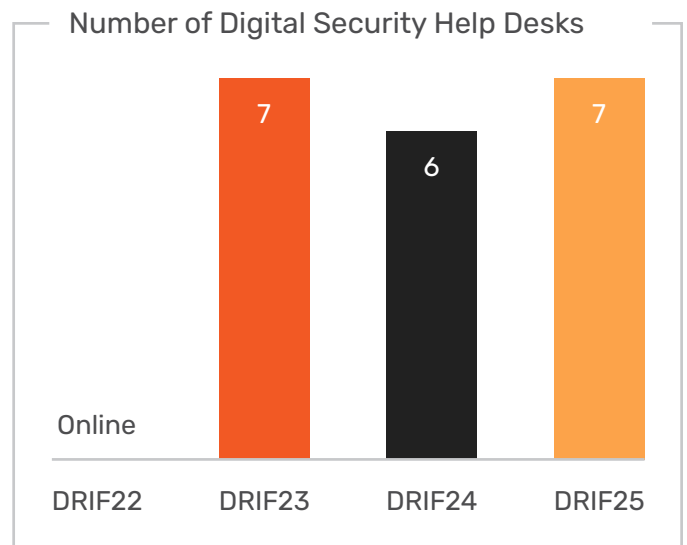
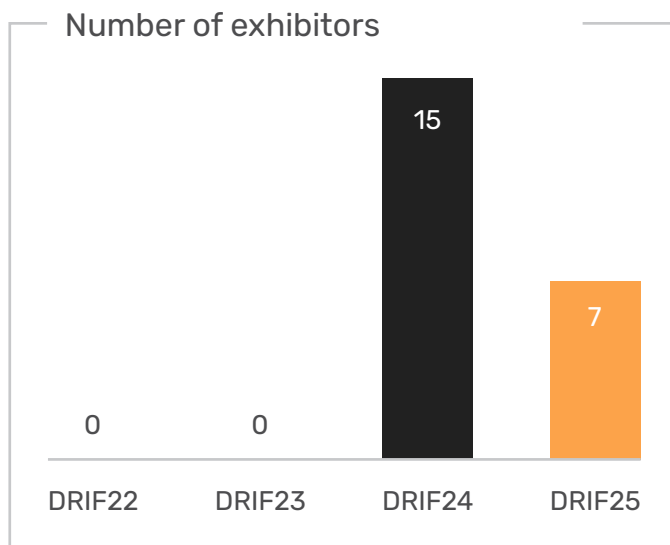
Number of in-person sessions



Number of in-person host countries



DRIF In Progress



Notable
Impact →

An Enriching Platform for Diverse Stakeholders

DRIF25 provided a platform for digital rights stakeholders to investigate issues and trends, highlight developments, and formulate strategies. The number of registered delegates in 2025 was 1399, 23 of whom were persons with disabilities, demonstrating growing interest in the event. While 1399 individuals registered for DRIF25, not all registered participants could physically attend the event due to a lack of logistical support. A total of 623 delegates attended DRIF in person. In 2024, DRIF registered

1044 delegates. The numbers show DRIF's potential for scaling in-person attendance in the coming years. With adequate resources, DRIF is a growing Global South platform where diverse stakeholders will converge to tackle significant challenges. The increased interest in participating in the event placed a responsibility on PIN to find and allocate resources for livestreaming to host the event and ensure greater impact, leveraging online platforms. PIN ensured that the DRIF venue was accessible for all, a core aspect of our programming.

DRIF Sessions and Format

122 sessions were hosted at the event, up from 96 sessions at DRIF24. While in 2024 we received 245 session proposals, in 2025 we received 346. The number of session proposals increased due to a greater interest in DRIF as a platform for learning and sharing of knowledge and interface with diverse stakeholders in the Global South.

The session objectives were focused on capacity building, policy

development, knowledge sharing and sustainability of digital rights and inclusion programming. The session hosts articulated clear objectives for their sessions and follow-up action after the DRIF convening to track progress. The session formats included workshops, lightning talks, panel sessions, launches, world cafes, tech demos, fireside chats, pre-event workshops, and exhibitions. The DRIF25 Agenda is available [here](#).

The sessions were hosted under six tracks below:

Digital Security



Trust and Accountability



Data protection, Privacy and Cyber Security



Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies



Digital Inclusion and Marginalised Groups



Human Rights and Freedoms



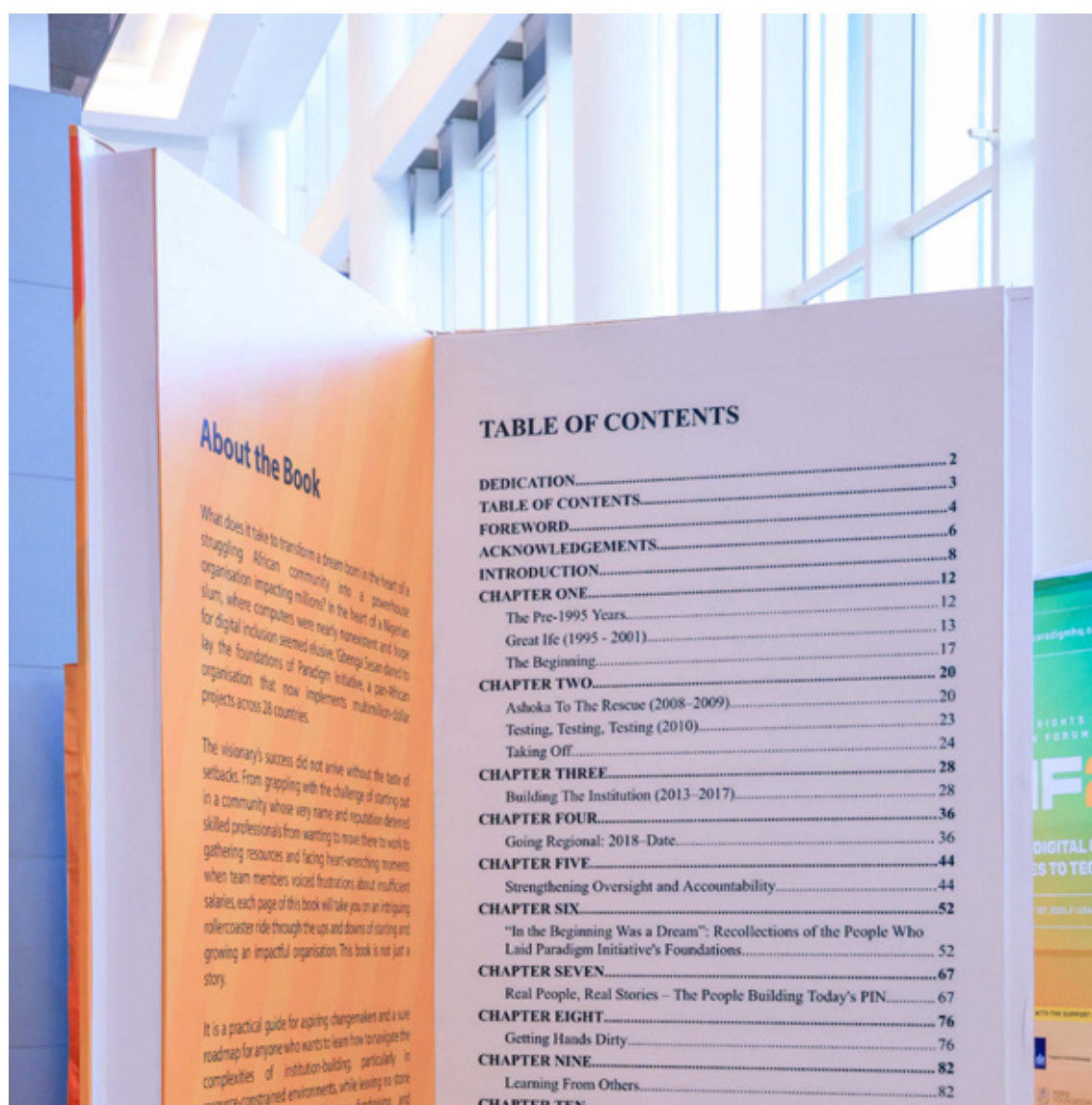
Product Launches

DRIF hosted at least six launch sessions, during which session hosts launched reports and new initiatives. Bloggers of Zambia launched the *State of Digital Rights in Zambia Report*, documenting digital rights developments in Zambia. Digital Action launched *The*

Big Tech and 2024 Elections Report, documenting the intersection between technology, human rights and elections. Media Monitoring Africa launched the *Elections, Internet Shutdowns and Digital Ubuntu report*, which explored Internet shutdowns in Africa during

the 2024 year of elections. Paradigm Initiative launched the *Londa Report* documenting 27 countries' compliance with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' *Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression and Access to Information*. The report includes a new Score Index developed by PIN. The report acts as a shadow report to the ACHPR Special Rapporteur's reports to the African Commission. Paradigm Initiative also launched the PIN book titled *The PIN Story: A*

Work In Progress, which documents untold stories of people, challenges, and behind-the-scenes decisions that shaped the organisation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation launched consultations that will inform the ACHPR Resolution 630 on *Developing Guidelines to assist States monitor technology companies in respect of their duty to maintain information integrity through independent fact checking*.



Contributing to Regional and Global Processes

DRIF contributed to global and regional processes through policy discussions on the World Summit on Information Society, which brought together policymakers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and government representatives from Ghana. The event was attended by the Minister of Tech and Science and representatives from the Freedom Online Coalition. The session discussed that the IGF should be a permanent feature for multistakeholder discussion and that its mandate should be renewed during the review process of WSIS. The session highlighted key priorities and initiatives being undertaken by countries that attended the session. DRIF provided

a platform for regional policy discussions on the African Union Data Policy Framework, specifying the need for countries to adopt and localise the policy to harmonise data policies across Africa.



Extracts from Session Host Reports



A central feature of DRIF25 was the contribution of session hosts who led engaging and insightful discussions on key themes related to digital rights and inclusion. These sessions were organised by civil society actors, technologists, and researchers from across Africa and the Global South. They reflected the Forum's participatory ethos, offering

a range of formats including panel discussions, hybrid dialogues, and lightning talks that brought together diverse voices to interrogate pressing digital issues. The sessions aligned strongly with the Forum's theme of *Promoting Digital Ubuntu in Approaches to Technology*, focusing on equity, resilience, and collaborative governance.

In the session titled "Z for Zeroth," speakers explored the cybersecurity challenges faced by civil society organisations, with a focus on the resource disparity between defenders and threat actors. The session introduced Zeroth Cloud, a platform demonstrating how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to strengthen cyber defence. Discussions highlighted practical use cases where AI tools were applied to automate responses, improve threat visibility, and support under-resourced actors in managing digital threats. Delivered in a hybrid format, the session encountered technical difficulties with sound, underscoring the need for improved technical support for remote participation.

The session on "Assisted Feminist Technology" showcased a compelling approach to tech development. This session explored how feminist principles can be integrated into technology design to enhance access, agency, and



innovation, specifically for women and young people with disabilities. A significant outcome was co-creating locally relevant ideas to improve assistive technology for this demographic. The session also served as a platform to highlight the “Spot App,” an inclusive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information platform designed with accessibility at its core.

The focus on “Assisted Feminist Technology” for women and youth with disabilities demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of intersectionality in the digital rights discourse. It moves beyond addressing disability access or gender equality in isolation, recognising how these identities intersect to create unique and compounded digital barriers. The approach emphasises that technology can be specifically designed, through a feminist lens, to address these complex challenges. The forward-looking mention of incorporating “climate-resilient assistive technologies” into future programming further exemplifies this multi-layered understanding of inclusion. This implies that future technology development and digital rights advocacy should prioritise intersectional approaches. Recognising that marginalised groups often face compounded challenges requires the deliberate creation of tailored, inclusive, and rights-based technological solutions that address the full spectrum of their experiences and needs.

A key contribution came from a session titled “Tech, Power, and Governance: The Policy Landscape in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and Zambia,” organised by a global democracy and technology initiative. The session



attracted 57 participants, including 32 females and 25 males. Drawing on insights from a recent policy report, the discussion explored how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) are being governed across various African contexts. Participants examined regulatory gaps and emphasised the need for harmonised approaches informed by regional instruments like the Malabo Convention and the African Union's Data Policy Framework.

The governance-focused session also addressed how digital systems could be designed to uphold democratic values, promote accountability, and protect privacy. Key recommendations included embedding rights-based principles into infrastructure design, enabling meaningful civil society engagement in AI policymaking, and fostering multistakeholder dialogues. The African Union was identified as a key player in coordinating continental standards. While no technical issues were reported during the session, the organisers noted a delay in accessing official session photos, which limited their ability to share insights on social media promptly.

Bringing a grassroots perspective to the programme, a Digital Rights and Inclusion Learning Lab alumnus delivered a lightning talk titled “No One Left Behind: Closing Cybersecurity Literacy Gaps Through Digital Ubuntu.” The session, attended by 26 participants, including 16 females and 10 males, highlighted the digital literacy barriers faced by marginalised communities. It connected cybersecurity to Ubuntu-inspired values of community, inclusion,



and shared responsibility. It also emphasised how digital exclusion—particularly in rural or underrepresented areas—can leave individuals vulnerable to threats and misinformation.

He outlined practical strategies for making cybersecurity education more inclusive. These included co-designing learning programmes with local communities, using trusted community spaces to disseminate information, translating materials into indigenous languages, and training local champions to lead awareness efforts. The speaker also responded to accessibility concerns raised during the session by offering adaptable cybersecurity resources for the Deaf community. Though the session was affected by delays from an earlier programme running over time, it still succeeded in delivering timely and context-relevant insights.

Across all sessions, several cross-cutting themes emerged. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of inclusive design, whether in technology governance, digital infrastructure, or educational programmes. Many hosts and speakers called for a shift from high-level commitments to concrete action, urging policymakers, civil society, and private sector actors to collaborate more intentionally. Participants also stressed prioritising local ownership, context sensitivity, and accessibility in digital rights advocacy and practice. The contributions of session hosts at DRIF25 played a

vital role in enriching the Forum's discourse and expanding its impact. They offered actionable recommendations and critical reflections informing ongoing advocacy, policy engagement, and movement-building efforts across the continent.

Geographical
Reach →

Stakeholders who registered for DRIF represented 65 countries, which include 39 countries in Africa, 14 countries from Europe, 4 countries from Asia, 3 countries from the Middle East and 5 countries from America.

Global South

- **Africa:** Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, The Gambia, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- **Asia:** India, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand
- **Middle East:** Israel, Jordan, United Arab Emirates
- **Latin America:** Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay

Global North

- **Europe:** Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom
- **North America:** Canada, United States Paraguay



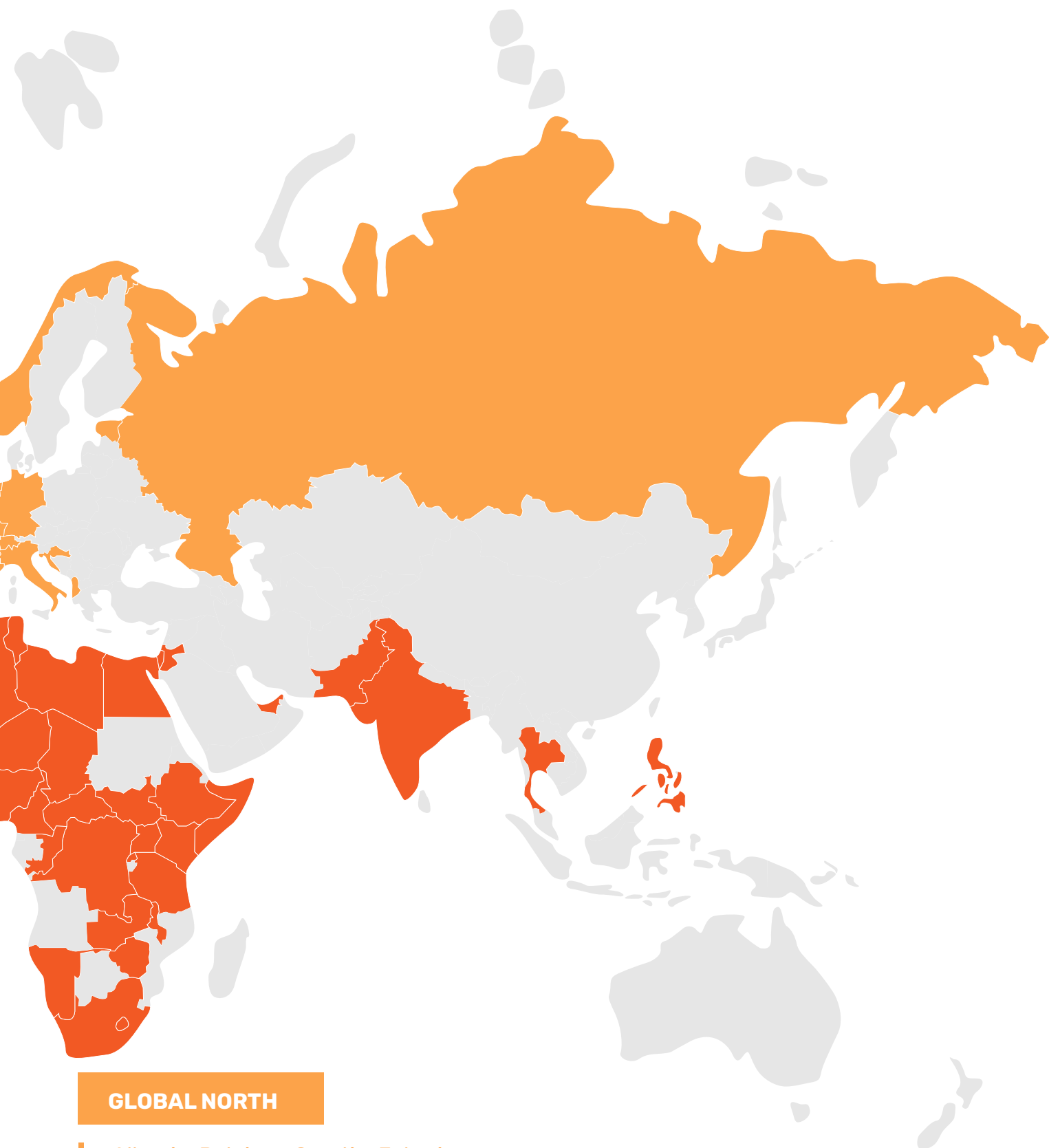
GLOBAL SOUTH

Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, The Gambia, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay

India, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand

Israel, Jordan, United Arab Emirates

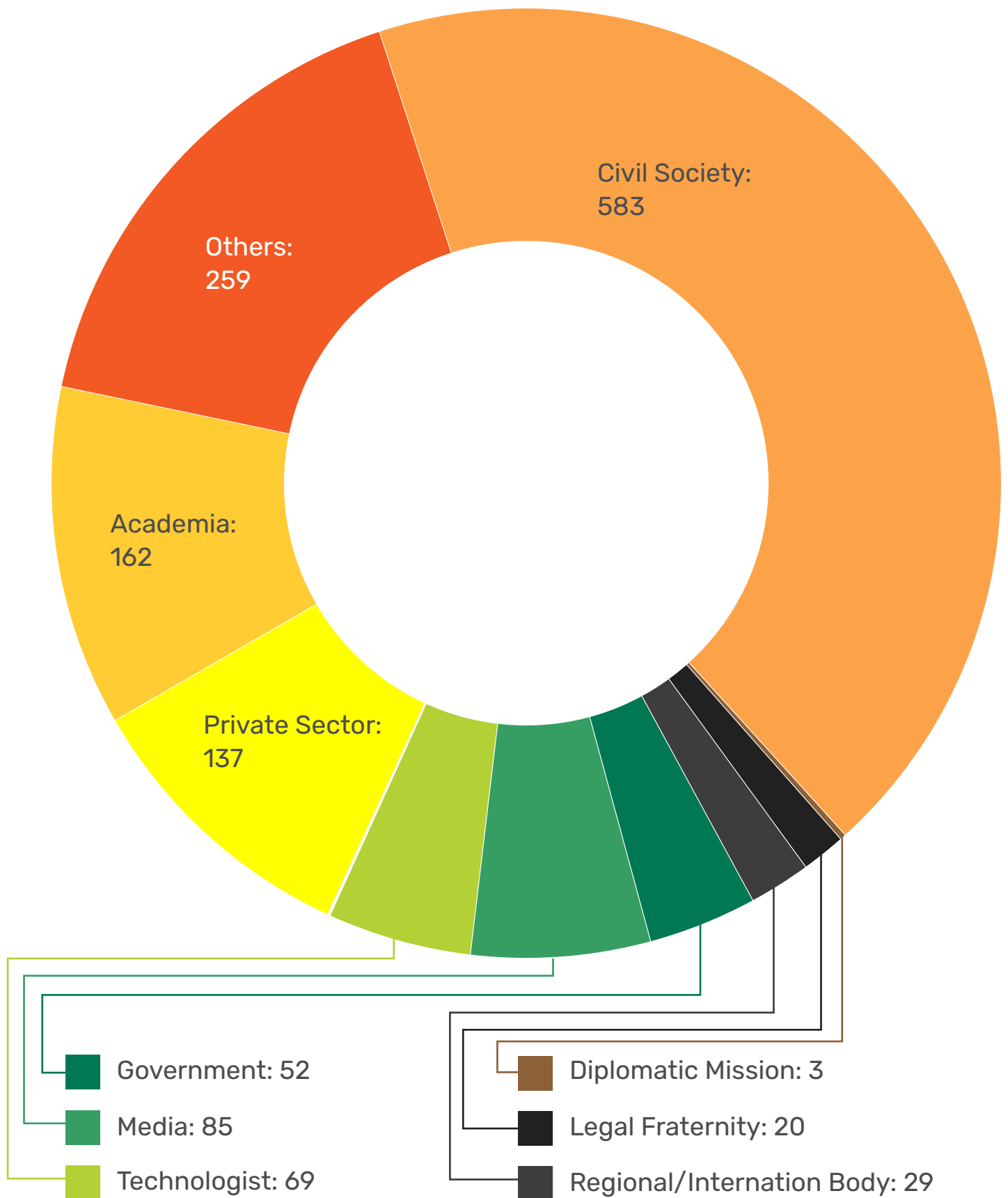


GLOBAL NORTH

Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Estonia,
France, Germany, Ireland, Italy,
Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain,
Switzerland, United Kingdom

Canada, United States

Registered Participants



Setting the DRIF25
Tone: Promoting Digital
Ubuntu in Approaches
to Technology →

1. Highlights from DRIF25

The DRIF25 Opening Ceremony set the tone for DRIF25, emphasising the theme and why the Global Majority should harness technology for the greater good, bridging digital divides, ensuring regional policies are reflected in national action plans and learning from cross-regional experiences to shape strategies. The session unpacked Zambia's strides in promoting a digital economy that embraces underserved communities, how the DRIF Community should harness the United Nations guidelines and developments such as the Global Digital Compact to promote digital ubuntu, a term denoting community approaches to address digital threats, digital authoritarianism and digital surveillance among others. It also highlighted how digital surveillance and internet shutdowns in the Global South are a common feature violating human rights and outlined the critical role of policymakers and the private sector in creating an enabling environment for digital rights to thrive.

The opening ceremony comprised expert remarks from PIN's Executive Director, Gbenga Sesan, the Zambian Minister of Technology and Science, Mr Felix Mutati, a recorded message by the African

Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Expression and Access to Information Commissioner Gereesha Topsy Sonoo, and the Chairperson of the Information Regulator of South Africa, Advocate Pansy Tlakula.

Major digital rights and inclusion developments were announced at DRIF. For instance, the Zambian Minister of Technology and Science Mr. Felix Mutati revealed that the Zambian government is revising its data protection legal framework and the Start Up Bill and promoting digital Ubuntu through various strategies, such as digital infrastructure, connectivity and ensuring that people in rural areas have equal access to digital and internet connectivity. Minister Mutati said that in 2025, the private sector will build [300 towers and upgrade 600](#) communication towers through private sector collaboration. Delegates such as the United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator Ms. Beatrice Mutali, who was part of the panel of the opening ceremony, indicated the UN's commitment to working with young people in Zambia to ensure digital rights and inclusion.

Digital rights actors who joined DRIF became advocates for

strengthening rights-respecting policies through South-South collaborations, identifying trends and opportunities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. During DRIF, attendees revealed that internet shutdowns are a major concern in Pakistan, while information disorders are a major concern in Brazil and this has led to Brazil developing a policy to safeguard citizens. DRIF provided a platform for stakeholders across the continent to understand the similarities among countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. DRIF also discussed how platforms such as Wikimedia can play a transformative role in advancing human rights and addressing gender bias in artificial intelligence. The DRIF25 closing ceremony began with pomp and fanfare as delegates

were treated to a DRIF theme song composed by a Zambian artist Maiko Zulu. The official launch of the much-anticipated PIN Book unpacked PIN's work since its inception, highlighting key lessons for civil society leaders. PIN's Chief Operating Officer Nnenna Paul-Ugochukwu, Data Privacy Brazil Co-Director Mariana Rielli delivered a vote of thanks, appreciating DRIF delegates' participation despite challenging times. The session ended with PIN's Executive Director, Gbenga Sesan, announcing the 2026 DRIF venue as Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Delegates participated in a coordinated dance routine, marking the official ending of DRIF25 in popular DRIF fashion.



2. Providing digital security at DRIF

A key outcome of DRIF 2025 was its direct provision of digital security to at-risk communities. Through workshops and hands-on training sessions, participants acquired vital skills and practical tools to defend themselves against evolving online threats, enhancing their resilience against digital attacks and surveillance. Twelve (12) digital security sessions, which include workshops and practical tech demo sessions, were conducted at DRIF25 compared to nine sessions in 2024. Participants gained actionable knowledge and tools to protect themselves and their communities online through these sessions. The sessions discussed the need to promote good cybersecurity habits and digital hygiene through strategies such as the creation of strong passwords, securing messaging platforms, avoiding social

engineering tactics, connectivity during internet shutdowns and organisational digital security. The sessions discussed that maintaining strong passwords and recognising phishing attempts are standard strategies for staying safe online. Sessions identified a series of factors that are setbacks to online security, including limited access to digital infrastructure and education, age-related digital gaps and discomfort with technology, economic barriers preventing access to devices or training and cultural disconnection from dominant cybersecurity narratives and solutions.

Seven (7) digital security booths were set up at DRIF, hosted by leading organisations PIN, Defenders Coalition, Derechos Digitales, Defend Defenders, Digital Society of Africa, the Zambian



Cyber Security Initiative Foundation (ZCSIF), and Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). Over three days, the booths collectively engaged 73 delegates, up from 65 in 2024 and 43 in 2023. Among them, 28 specifically requested support with device diagnostics or installing anti-malware software. In addition, several delegates received hands-on guidance on digital protection tools during the general consultation, including secure communication practices and Virtual Private Network (VPN) installation. These booths provided technical support around real-world digital threats faced by African human rights defenders.

The emphasis on digital security and dedicated stream during DRIF was a constant reminder of the need for all stakeholders to respect and uphold the right to privacy and the need to safeguard human rights defenders. Best practices discussed at DRIF25 empowered delegates to manage their digital footprint, secure their communications and safeguard sensitive information to reduce their vulnerability to privacy breaches and online harassment. Direct capacity building during the DRIF Help Desks equipped those most susceptible to digital threats with skills to prevent and respond to cyber attacks, promoting safer and more secure

online environments. In line with Community Recommendations from DRIF24, PIN created an opportunity for the private sector to build the knowledge of civil society organisations on strategies being undertaken by tech companies to ensure safety online. Google hosted a session on fact-checking, Meta conducted a closed-door session with civil society actors and TikTok conducted a session highlighting how they implemented measures to protect and safeguard children's rights online. Organisations like the Internet Society are committed to developing a collaborative resource guide with digital security tools tailored for community trainers and initiating a pilot digital safety follow-up support programme led by community educators. DRIF session hosts committed to exploring partnerships to localise tools into African languages and engaging with national and regional policy actors to push for digital security integration in civic education.

3. Increased networks and collaborations

Participating in DRIF25 expanded and deepened delegates' networks and collaborations across the digital rights ecosystem. The forum facilitated the formation of new strategic partnerships and reinforced existing alliances. During DRIF, side sessions such as the Net Rights Coalition Happy Hour and the session on building solidarity beyond borders allowed the network to grow and gain at least seven new members. As a result, the network will amplify members' voices and ensure coordinated action in advancing human rights and freedoms in the digital age.

In line with Paradigm Initiative's Strategic Management Plan (SMP) to expand to more communities affected by digital rights and inclusion, eight sessions were hosted by representatives from Asia, Latin America and North Africa, strengthening networks and collaborations across continents and diverse jurisdictions. DRIF hosted 12 French sessions, ensuring language diversity and inclusion. The presence of stakeholders from the Global South presented an opportunity for cross-collaboration and partnerships among delegates across countries and continents.

As a result of DRIF, some delegates planned future collaborations in joint initiatives for policy advocacy, public awareness campaigns, and shared resource development with organisations they met at DRIF. To bridge participation gaps, organisations such as the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) launched consultations on the development of guidelines on ensuring information integrity on tech platforms. The launch of such consultations at DRIF is a crucial step in influencing policy, promoting tech accountability and respect for human rights. It ensures participation of many stakeholders in the process. The sessions at DRIF bridged knowledge and participation gaps, allowing stakeholders to be fully aware of policy formulation as it occurs and contributes to processes.

For the first time, DRIF also brought together internally displaced persons and refugees who are often marginalised yet face significant digital rights challenges such as misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech online. PIN was able to foster collaborations with the United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR).

As a result of the collaboration, 10 delegates from Zambia with lived experience of displacement participated at DRIF, increasing their knowledge on online freedoms and enriching PIN programmatic work. DRIF25 was unique in that it was attended by diverse stakeholders, including session hosts representing international organisations such as

the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). DRIF offered a platform for technology companies such as Google, TikTok and Meta to host sessions and engage with the community.



Celebrating Great Company

Country partners contributed phenomenally to the successful implementation of DRIF25. Through their diligence, partnerships and on-ground support, DRIF25 was a success. PIN would not have sustained this signature Project throughout the years without the immense support of our funding partners. We celebrate this tremendous support, shaping the story of impact!

Sponsors

Luminate
Building stronger societies



Kingdom of the Netherlands



**FORD
FOUNDATION**

Google

**MacArthur
Foundation**

**M CHARLES STEWART
MOTT FOUNDATION**

Meta



**WIKIMEDIA
FOUNDATION**

Wellspring
Philanthropic Fund



Oversight Board

In addition to many individual
DRIF supporters



Country Partners



Exhibitors



DRIF's Online Digital Footprint!

Social media reach: DRIF25 saw the introduction of standalone dedicated DRIF (@DRIForum) pages on Facebook, X, and Instagram platforms.

	Facebook	↗
	Instagram	↗
	X (Formerly Twitter)	↗



The hashtags **#DRIF25** and **#MyDRIFUbuntuExperience** secured a social media reach of **46,512,135**, with **#DRIF25** **trending at number two in Zambia** on X on day two of the event.

Some other key hashtags that were constantly used alongside #DRIF include #Digital Ubuntu, Digital Rights, Inclusion, Global South.

***Digital Ubuntu
Digital Rights
Inclusion
Global South.***



As a way of further enhancing our storytelling, we launched a DRIF25 Podcast Series where 15 guests were interviewed with 12 being 2024 Londa authors, six being PIN team members and four from our French speaking community.

The Londa 2024 report got the highest share of DRIF-related coverage by the media



DRIF's Chic Media Presence!

The #DRIF25 received media coverage in platforms with a consolidated reach of 3,975,461.

+3.9M

We got featured by both online and traditional media including country-specific platforms such as Diamond TV, Times of Zambia, and Zambia Daily Mail. The event was also picked by media in other countries within the region including Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana and USA.



Reflections from PIN

We envisaged Digital Ubuntu as the unifying theme for stakeholders at DRIF25. By highlighting values of dignity, community, and shared humanity, we aimed to focus the digital rights discourse on communitarian approaches to digital rights. Assessing the challenges faced in the Global South through community engagements, we reflected on the need for carrying everyone along, considering that human rights are for all and not select classes of society. We are excited to note the deep reflections and solutions the DRIF Community brought on board, shaping the conversations, connections and collaborations.'

The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants was

evidence of the importance of the event for the community. Attendees described DRIF25 as both a meaningful space for dialogue and a catalyst for real-world action. Partnerships were formed with renewed commitment to advancing digital rights and inclusion. The forum's inclusive atmosphere and cross-sectoral engagement underscored that diverse voices must co-create sustainable digital policy solutions.

As we look ahead, Paradigm Initiative remains committed to growing DRIF as a critical Global South platform for shaping digital futures. The road to DRIF26 is already underway—and we are more energised than ever to keep building a digital world anchored in Ubuntu and human rights for all.



Through the Lens of DRIF Delegates

DRIF25 stood out as a dynamic convening beyond presentations; it sparked action, nurtured relationships, and deepened regional solidarity in the fight for digital rights. Participants left the forum informed and energised to carry the conversations forward in their own contexts. One attendee reflected, *"I came to DRIF with questions and left with partners and a clearer direction."* Another added, *"this wasn't just another event, it was a turning point for how I approach digital advocacy in my community."* These sentiments echoed across post-event feedback, as attendees described how the experience inspired them to move from dialogue to collaboration, with several noting they had already initiated follow-up projects or joint initiatives in the weeks following the forum.

The forum also played a connecting bridge between government institutions and civil society. A Cameroonian government official remarked, *"we see ourselves as the tension reducers between government and civil society."*

DRIF25 gave us the chance to listen and be listened to." Similarly, a Zambian Ministry of Technology and Science representative noted, *"Zambia is quite grateful for the opportunity to host DRIF25 here in Lusaka. Our transformation will not take place unless we collaborate and work with each other."* These reflections underscore how DRIF25 opened doors for co-creation and cross-sector dialogue, with ongoing discussions now taking place around more transparent and inclusive digital policy frameworks at the national level.

Beyond policy, DRIF25 also ignited change in how media professionals understand and communicate digital rights. A journalist said, *"DRIF25 helped me realise I'm not just reporting news, I'm shaping understanding."* This awakening led to the creation of a [podcast series](#) focused on unpacking digital rights, misinformation, and platform regulation for young African audiences. *"I used to think tech policy was for lawyers and governments. Now I see it's also my space and my responsibility to help our people understand what's at stake."*

Academia also found fertile ground for collaboration and innovation at DRIF25. One academic participant shared, *"The session on safeguarding information integrity offered critical insights into how platforms handle misinformation. We must focus more on big tech—they hold the main key to information integrity in Africa."* The academic community left DRIF25 with renewed clarity on the importance of producing accessible, evidence-based research that bridges the gap between scholarship and advocacy. Several institutions expressed interest in developing joint research projects with civil society partners they met at the forum.

Funders present at DRIF25 shared reflections on the value of supporting platforms that convene multi-stakeholder communities. A funder noted, *"It's rare to see this level of authentic dialogue across sectors. DRIF has consistently demonstrated that local actors have the solutions; we are here to listen and provide long-term support."* This sentiment reinforced the importance of investing in projects and sustained ecosystems of trust and collaboration.

Grassroots voices were not left behind. Community organisers and local activists shared how DRIF25 helped validate their daily work on the ground. One activist remarked,

"It was refreshing to engage in a space where African values like Ubuntu—community, dignity, and care—are not just footnotes, but central to the digital conversation."

Others shared that they were taking lessons from DRIF25 into digital literacy trainings, civic tech programmes, and local dialogues with policymakers.

International organisations and multilateral actors also praised DRIF25's inclusive structure. One participant noted, *"What's powerful about DRIF is that it doesn't treat digital rights as an abstract idea. It's rooted in lived experiences, and that's where global policy needs to be grounded."* These endorsements underscore DRIF's unique ability to translate local insights into globally relevant policy discussions.

From newfound partnerships to renewed advocacy efforts and creative public engagement, DRIF25 sparked real and lasting change. It was not just a space for conversation, but a launchpad for collective movement. As one attendee aptly said, *"DRIF is not just a space to talk. It's a space to connect, learn, and act."* As the road to DRIF26 begins, participants carry forward the spirit of Digital Ubuntu, working to embed dignity, inclusion, and humanity in every facet of our digital future.

To Greater Impact!

OBSTACLE:

- Some session hosts indicated that their allocated time was not enough and more time would have allowed deeper interaction with the audience.

SOLUTION:

- Offer a mixed blend of formats and session times.
- Increase fundraising efforts to sustain event days



OBSTACLE:

- Some panellists joining online had poor internet connectivity

SOLUTION:

- Host DRIF as a fully in-person event



OBSTACLE:

- Some open sessions were not live streamed.

SOLUTION:

Increase fundraising efforts for resources.

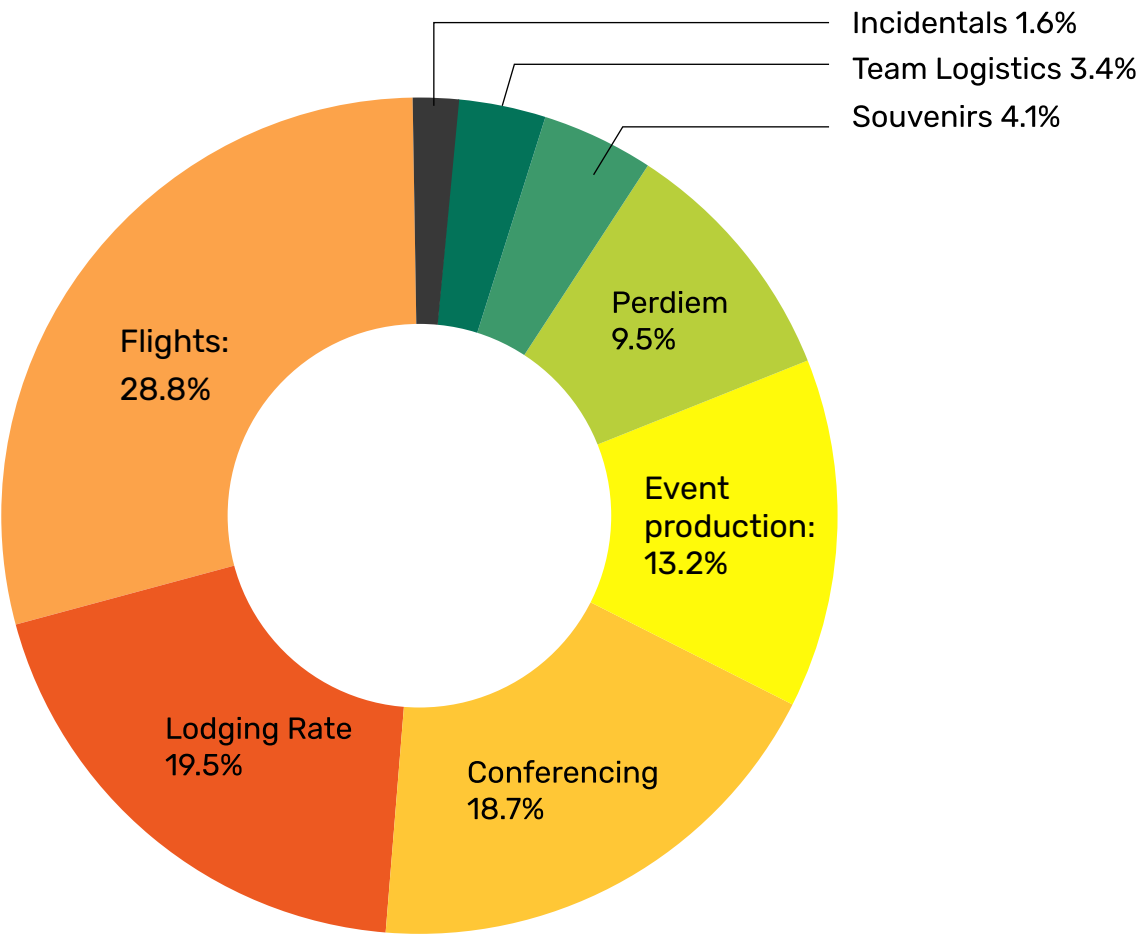


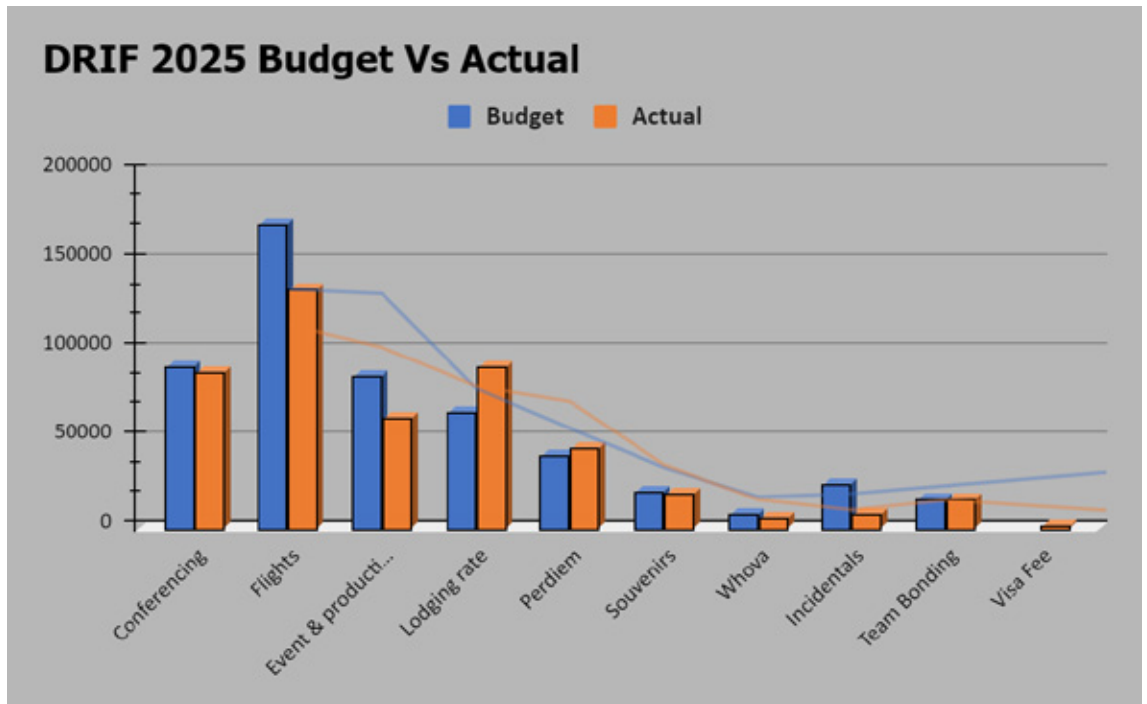
Celebrating our Funding Pot!

The DRIF 2025 budget received support from eleven (11) diverse funding partners, contributing a combined total of \$515,620.48. This amount includes 0.39% generated from ticket sales. Many thanks to all our funders who made DRIF 2025 a success.

achieved through rigorous financial prudence and systematic cost management strategies deployed throughout the project. The chart below provides a detailed breakdown of DRIF expenses by category, alongside a Budget versus Actual performance comparison.

Total expenses incurred for DRIF 2025 amounted to \$509,369.46,





Keep the Music Going!

Through fundraising initiatives, PIN seeks resources to increase the scope and reach of DRIF's impact. PIN leverages the growing network of digital rights actors in the Global South to tackle digital rights challenges, placing issues and trends at greater visibility for diverse stakeholders. Our community-driven approaches enable stakeholders to take the DRIF recommendations and implement programmes that advance digital rights and inclusion. Each DRIF is different, bringing new projects, reports and actions to the fore, demonstrating an evolving digital

rights landscape. DRIF's ability to bring together diverse communities cultivates partnerships and enables stakeholders to collectively thrive and adapt to evolving challenges and ensure shared advocacy in championing digital rights and inclusion. This posture of DRIF as a community-driven forum showcases the community's strong affiliation and commitment to the sustainability of DRIF. PIN follows up on action points, engaging the DRIF community through many coalitions and networks, including the Net Rights Coalition, hosted by PIN and other programmatic work

across Africa. For the first time, PIN engaged the DRIF community to support DRIF. PIN team members could not be deterred, with some joining the inaugural network of DRIF supporters. Our

amazing partnerships with funders from diverse funding streams demonstrate PIN's great company, looking out for a brighter digital rights and inclusion environment in the Global South.



Where to Next?

Following consultations with the DRIF Community, the 2026 DRIF will be held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, for the first time since the history of the forum, demonstrating tremendous growth and inclusive prioritisation of increasing participation in diverse regions.



'We express our heartfelt gratitude to our funders, supporters and delegates for a phenomenal DRIF25!'

The Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF25) Community Recommendations →

Overview

The Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF25) was held from 29 April to 1 May 2025 and attended by 623 delegates who shared their reflections and recommendations through online surveys and engagements at DRIF25. These Community Recommendations reflect the aspirations of the DRIF community, which are aimed at

improving digital rights and digital inclusion in the Global South. They are a tangible call to action and Community-Driven Communiqué to diverse stakeholders, tracked through actions of stakeholders in the digital rights ecosystem during the DRIF cycle, beginning after each DRIF to the next.

Recommendations to Governments

- Increase the participation of policymakers and regulators in DRIF and similar digital rights dialogues.
- Align national digital laws with international human rights standards to protect online freedoms.
- Involve National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in digital policy development and oversight.

Recommendations to the Private Sector

- Develop technologies that reflect and uphold African values, including community, dignity, and social justice.
- Increase transparency and ethical standards in data collection, processing, and sharing practices.
- Partner with local organisations to co-create inclusive and culturally relevant digital solutions.
- Invest in initiatives that promote digital literacy and responsible tech use, especially in underserved communities.

- Embed accessibility and language inclusivity into products and platforms to ensure broader participation.
- Embed human rights considerations in content moderation.

Recommendations to CSOs

- Build and strengthen cross-sectoral and cross-border coalitions to engage effectively with government and tech actors.
- Document and disseminate grassroots digital rights issues to influence policy adopting a bottom-up approach.
- Promote inclusive digital literacy initiatives targeting marginalised groups, including women, youth, and rural communities.

Recommendations to the Media

- Increase reporting on digital rights, policy gaps, and the impacts of digital exclusion.
- Educate the public on their digital rights and the importance of digital inclusion.
- Investigate and hold governments and tech companies accountable for digital rights violations.

Recommendations to the Academia

- Conduct and publish accessible, policy-relevant research to inform advocacy and legislation.
- Focus research efforts on technology companies' accountability, AI ethics, and platform regulation in African contexts.
- Collaborate with civil society and policymakers through research partnerships that support evidence-based advocacy.

To Funders and Development Partners

- Provide sustained funding for multi-stakeholder platforms like DRIF that facilitate inclusive dialogue.
- Support underfunded and emerging issues such as AI, disinformation, online gender-based violence, and language justice.
- Promote and fund South-South learning and collaboration initiatives.

To DRIF Convenors

- Provide sustained funding for multi-stakeholder platforms like DRIF that facilitate inclusive dialogue.
- Support underfunded and emerging issues such as AI, disinformation, online gender-based violence, and language justice.
- Promote and fund South-South learning and collaboration initiatives.

Join the Conversation

✕ @driforum // drif.paradigmhq.org