2023 Annual Report

Navigating the Digital Landscape: KICTANet's Impact in 2023

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About us

Guiding Philosophy: KICTANet guiding philosophy is that of encouraging synergies for ICT policy related activities and initiatives. Accordingly, the Network provides mechanisms and a framework for continuing cooperation and collaboration in ICT matters among industry, technical community, academia, media, development partners and Government.

Vision: Transforming communities through the power of ICTs.

Mission: Promote an enabling environment in the ICT sector that is robust, open, accessible, and rights-based through multistakeholderism.

Our core values:

Multi-stakeholderism	Diversity	Excellence
Impactful	Independent oversight	Integrity
Community led	Professionalism	Transparency

Governance

KICTANet's multi-stakeholder membership is drawn from civil Society, ICT industry representatives, the technical ICT community, academia, government and media - working in the ICT sector in Kenya. This consideration of multistakeholderism considers the general diversity of industries and of expertise. Regular policy discussions happen on the multistakeholder list serve, which is run by the secretariat and allows diverse stakeholders to engage and dialogue on topical tech issues, and make recommendations on possible solutions.

Our leadership and structure comprise Trustees (Board) and a Secretariat. The Trustees oversee the overall conduct of the affairs of KICTANet including decision-making, policy direction, project management and fund-raising. The secretariat is currently led and managed by the Chief Executive Officer, who leads a diverse team that implements the activities of KICTANet and reports to the Trustees on a regular basis.

Letter from the Chair of the Board of Trustees

Dear KICTANet Community,

As I reflect on 2023, I am proud of the strides KICTANet has made in shaping Kenya's digital policy landscape. In a year marked by rapid technological advancements, our work in policy advocacy, research, capacity building, and multistakeholder engagement has continued to uphold the principles of inclusivity, transparency, and digital rights for all.

This year, we deepened our engagement with policymakers, civil society, industry leaders, and the technical community. Through collaborative advocacy, research, and capacity-building initiatives, we have influenced critical policy discussions on internet governance, data protection, cybersecurity, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. The launch of the Tatua Digital Resilience Centre and convening the Kenya Internet Governance Forum were milestones in ensuring that technology serves all, especially those at risk of digital exclusion.

We remain steadfast in our vision of transforming communities through the power of ICTs. As we move forward, I call upon all stakeholders to continue working together to shape policies that promote a secure, open, and human-centric digital ecosystem. Our collective efforts will ensure that Kenya remains at the forefront of digital transformation in Africa.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I extend my sincere gratitude to our partners, members, and supporters who have been instrumental in advancing our mission. Your dedication and support fuels our progress, and together, we will continue to drive meaningful change in the ICT sector.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Ali Hussein Kassim
Chair, Board of Trustees
KICTANet

Letter from the CEO

Dear Friends, Partners and Stakeholders,

It is with immense pride that I present the **KICTANet 2023 Annual Report**, capturing our key achievements and the collective efforts that shaped the digital policy landscape over the past year.

In 2023, we deepened our impact across four core pillars: policy advocacy, research, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. From convening Kenya's 16th Internet Governance Forum to expanding digital literacy programs for marginalized communities, our initiatives have empowered thousands and shaped critical policy conversations at national and regional levels. Our engagements ensured KICTANet remained an active voice in shaping internet and technology governance frameworks.

One of the most significant developments was the launch of the Tatua Digital Resilience Centre, which provides critical support to social justice organizations in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. We also continued our advocacy for digital accessibility, gender inclusivity, and data protection, ensuring that **no one is left behind** in the digital transformation journey. For example, our research on online gender-based violence and the accessibility of government websites reinforced our commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable digital environment.

Looking ahead, our focus remains on expanding digital literacy efforts, strengthening partnerships, and advocating for policies that promote internet freedom and human-centric approaches to ICT regulation. The digital landscape is evolving rapidly, and KICTANet is committed to ensuring that technology is used to enhance human rights, empower communities, and drive socio-economic development.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our partners, donors, and the KICTANet community for your unwavering support. Your commitment drives us and enables us to continue making a lasting impact.

Let us remain committed to **building an inclusive digital future for all.**

Dr. Grace Githaiga
Convenor and Chief Executive Officer
KICTANet

Introduction

KICTANet is a multi-stakeholder platform for ICT policy and regulation. KICTANet was born 17 years ago as a loose network of professionals from different stakeholder groups interested in contributing to Kenya's first ICT policy. After the policy was passed in 2006, the network remained a focal point for discussing topical issues in the sector as they emerged. Over the years, KICTANet has become a space for input on ICT policy and related matters.

In 2010, Kenyans secured a new constitution that redefined the relationship between the state and the people. Among its significant gains is that public participation is now among the nation's values and principles. Accordingly, public organs, public officers, and state officers must consult the people when making decisions that affect them. The Constitution gives meaning to the work of KICTANet as a network and enhances its role as a space for multistakeholder discussions. Nevertheless, with so many processes requiring public input, platforms for public participation must be better organised to allow for meaningful input. For this reason, KICTANet embarked on reorganising itself. This involved creating the building blocks for an institution for ICT policy, research, advocacy, capacity building, and networking. However, it maintains the loose membership that enables anyone, new or old, to contribute to issues of interest at any time.

This report gives a snapshot of the year and the areas that KICTANet is focusing on to position itself at the heart of people-centred development in the ICT sector. It also contains what is envisioned for our country and region in the coming years and how we see KICTANet contributing to more human-centric policymaking.

Review of our Strategic Plan

Every two years, a review of the evolution of Kenya's tech landscape and the impact of KICTANet programmatic work takes place, mainly to inform updates and changes necessary. KICTANet continued to receive requests from stakeholders, with one main one being the need to decentralise programs and conceptualise the new and emerging ICT concepts to the rural areas in order for technologies to improve the realities of the most marginalised. Accordingly, we responded by spreading out our programs and building the capacity of more than 30 women community activists in Kakamega on digital security. We trained farmers in Nakuru and Laikipia counties on cyber hygiene and digital finance tools.

In addition, having increased the design of our engagements to hybrid as was the survival trend for organisations during COVID-19, we have also received calls to go beyond the continent's borders. We heeded these calls and began working with our partners to strengthen digital resilience in the East African region through research and technical support. Our Kenya School of Internet Governance Program attracts participants from Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda. For this reason, we have rebranded to KICTANet with the abbreviations.

How we Do it

KICTANet's work is guided by four pillars:

Research

Under research, Our policy advocacy and capacity building are supported by evidence based research through an established working group on both current and emerging issues. Some of the topics identified include access as a right, digital literacy, cybersecurity, the Internet, and elections.

Evidence-based Stakeholder Engagement

This is core to the character of the network, where policy change springs from crowd-sourced ideas from the network, and is community-led. Our engagement is multi pronged; main platform is the stakeholders' mailing list. Other forms include thought leadership convenings, bilaterals and town halls.

Evidence - based Policy Advocacy

We bring stakeholders together to discuss the best policy alternatives and also monitor the progress of policy development processes.

Capacity Building

To ensure continuity and diversity in policy development, we bring in new voices in the different stakeholder backgrounds through resource development, awareness campaigns, training and events.
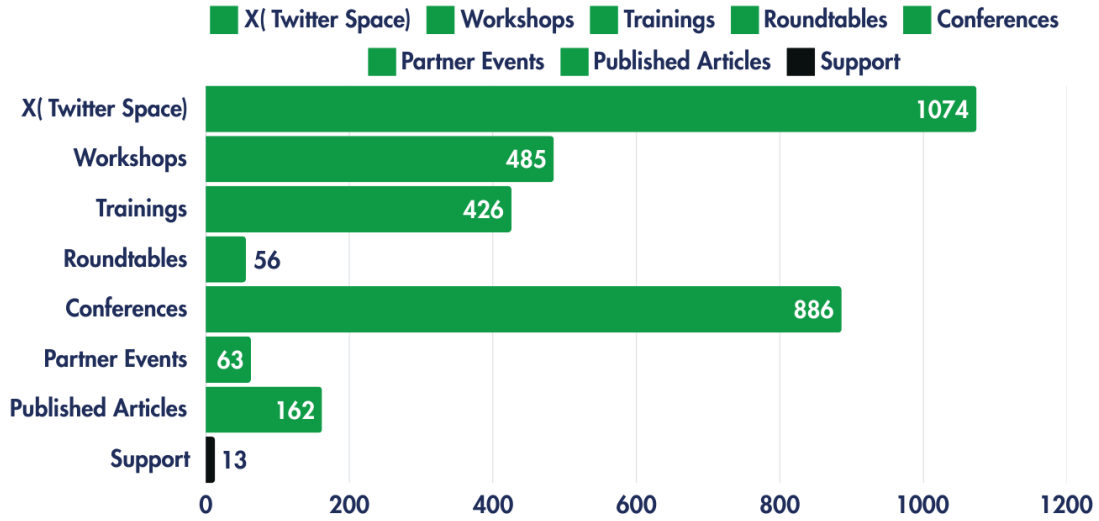
Executive Summary

In 2023, KICTANet focused on four key pillars: Policy Advocacy, Capacity Building, Research, and Stakeholder Engagement. Our initiatives have made significant strides in promoting digital inclusion and human rights. The key initiatives include:

- **Launch of the Tatua Digital Resilience Centre**: In collaboration with other Africa Internet Rights Alliance (AIRA) members, KICTANet established the Tatua Digital Resilience Centre. This initiative aims to enhance the digital resilience of Social Justice Organizations (SJOs) in East Africa. The Centre provides support to SJOs in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, enabling them to effectively navigate the digital landscape, mitigate digital threats, and leverage technology to advance their missions. The Tatua Centre is part of a wider network of resilience hubs under the Ford Foundation's Weaving Resilience initiative for Stronger Civil Society in the Global South.
- **Launch of Accessibility of Government Websites for Persons with Disability Scorecard**: KICTANet, through its ICT Access and Equality for Persons with Disability program, conducted comprehensive research on the accessibility of government websites for people with disabilities. This research culminated in the development and launch of a dedicated scorecard. This initiative aimed to assess the accessibility of government services and advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the digital sphere.

Our Year in Numbers

Initiatives	No	Persons Benefited
Twitter Spaces	5	1,074
Workshops	12	485
Training	7	426
Roundtables	1	56
Conferences	2	866
Partner events	1	63
Support	1	13
Blogs published	162	
Total	**28**	**3,165**

Our Year in Numbers.

Legend: X(Twitter Space) · Workshops · Trainings · Roundtables · Conferences · Partner Events · Published Articles · Support

Category	Value
X(Twitter Space)	1074
Workshops	485
Trainings	426
Roundtables	56
Conferences	886
Partner Events	63
Published Articles	162
Support	13

X (Twitter Spaces) 1,074

Workshops 485

Training 426

Roundtables 56

Conferences 886

Partner Events 63

Support 13

Published Articles 162

Total Impact 3,165

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Key Achievements

- **Policy Advocacy:** Engaged with over 50 stakeholders across various sectors. Successfully advocated for policies that improved internet access for an estimated 1 million individuals.

- **Capacity Building:** Trained over 300 participants in cybersecurity and digital rights. Empowered more than 30 women community activists in Kakamega on digital security.

- **Research:** Conducted studies on online gender-based violence impacting over 200 women. Published reports that informed policy discussions affecting an estimated 5 million users.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Hosted or participated in over 20 forums, engaging with diverse stakeholders to discuss ICT challenges. Collaborated with international partners to enhance digital resilience across East Africa.

KICTANet's advocacy efforts have contributed to the development of more inclusive ICT policies that respect human rights. Capacity-building initiatives have fostered a more informed digital society, enhancing community resilience against cyber threats. Research outputs have provided critical insights that shaped public awareness campaigns and policy debates. Multi-stakeholder collaborations have led to innovative solutions addressing digital challenges in Kenya and beyond.

KICTANet aims to continue expanding its reach by decentralizing programs and enhancing digital literacy among marginalized communities. Future initiatives will focus on strengthening partnerships, advocating for digital rights, and promoting equitable access to technology across the region.

The year 2023 marked significant progress for KICTANet in championing digital inclusion and human rights. Through our collective efforts, we have laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and resilient ICT sector in Kenya.

Multistakeholder Engagement

Throughout 2023, KICTANet actively engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders to promote digital rights, inclusion, and capacity building in Kenya. By engaging with policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society organizations, KICTANet continues to effectively advocate for digital rights, promotes capacity building, and empowers marginalized groups to thrive in the digital age.

KICTANet convened the 16th Kenya Internet Governance Forum (IGF) on June 22nd, 2023, under the theme *"The Internet We Want- Empowering All Kenyan People"*. The hybrid event brought together 350 physical and 306 virtual participants from various sectors, including government, private sector, civil society, and academia. Key discussion topics included cybersecurity, data privacy, online harassment, artificial intelligence, and digital inclusion. The forum emphasised a multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance, highlighting the importance of creating an internet space that allows free engagement, respects diverse perspectives, and enables government responses against bad actors.

L-R:'Gbenga Sesan Paradigm Initiative, Bernd LakemeierProgramme Director, Sustainable Economic Development - GIZ, Grace Githaiga Convenor, KICTANet, Dr. Vincent Ngundi Director of Cyber Security - Communications Authority and Mercy Ndegwa, Public Policy Director, East & Horn of Africa, Meta Platforms Inc during the high level panel session on The Internet We Want - Empowering All People.

[The event](#) featured multiple sessions addressing critical internet-related challenges, including a high-level panel on empowering Kenyan people, discussions on cyber safety, human rights online, and a fireside chat on AI and emerging technologies. A notable highlight was the Kenya School of Internet Governance (KESIG) award ceremony.

L-R: Kenya Youth IGF Coordinator, Youth IGF, Lillian Kariuki - Executive Director - Watoto Watch Network, Senator Allan Chesang, Chairperson of the Senate ICT Committee, Dr Grace Githaiga, KICTANet CEO, Sarah Muyonga Public Policy Manager East and Horn of Africa at Meta and Kelvin Kariuki Multimedia University and KeSIG trainer.

The [Kenya Youth Internet Governance Forum](#) (IGF) 2023, held on June 21st, brought together 86 physical and 30 online attendees for its 3rd edition under the theme *"The Internet We Want: Empowering all Kenyan Youth!".* The event highlighted the critical role of youth in internet governance, emphasising meaningful participation and engagement in ICT ecosystems.

The forum featured two primary sessions focusing on critical digital issues. The first session addressed cybersecurity, with experts discussing capacity-building challenges, educational gaps, and opportunities in the field. The second session explored social media's impact on mental health, examining both positive and negative effects of digital platforms. Notable participants included Senator Allan Chesang, Chairperson of the Senate ICT Committee, who emphasised the government's role in developing digital policies, and panelists from various sectors who provided insights into digital literacy, online safety, and youth empowerment in the technological landscape.

Here's a breakdown of other key engagements:

- **Government Consultations:** KICTANet participated in consultations [on access to the internet and its impact on women's public participation](#), the Kenyan government's proposed cybercrime regulations, and discussions with the ICT Authority.
- **International Advocacy:** KICTANet actively participated in international forums like the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) Strategy Meeting, Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on ICT, and [UNESCO Internet for Trust Conference](#), advocating for global digital rights advancements.
- **Partnerships:** KICTANet collaborated with organizations like Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Y254 TV, and ICT Caucus to celebrate International Women's Day and raise awareness about digital inclusion.
- **Industry Events:** KICTANet participated in industry events like the 16th Edition Cyber Security Summit, Data Privacy Week, Last-Mile Connectivity Roundtable, Sustainable Operating Models for Connected Schools forum, [the 10th edition of the Digital Rights and InclusionForum (DRIF23)](#) and the 12th Connected Summit.
- **Women's Empowerment:** KICTANet prioritized women's rights in the digital space through consultations with women MPs, events on online dating experiences for people with disabilities, and International Women's Day celebrations across various locations.
- **Accessibility:** KICTANet addressed accessibility concerns by conducting research on website accessibility for people with disabilities and participating in discussions on online dating experiences for this group.

Partnerships and Coalitions

KICTANet strengthened its collaborative efforts through key partnerships and coalitions. We also forged a partnership with the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation and the Slovak Embassy in Nairobi. This collaboration aims to enhance Kenya's cybersecurity and privacy landscape. The partnership leverages KICTANet's in-depth understanding of the Kenyan ICT environment with Slovakia's expertise and best practices in cybersecurity and data protection. This collaboration will focus on crucial areas such as: data protection, digital identity and gender equality.

From left to right: Dr. Grace Githaiga, CEO of KICTANet, and Ms Charlotte Marie Matusova, Deputy Head of Mission/Consul of Slovakia in Kenya during the partnership MoU signing at the KICTANet office.

Another significant milestone was the launch of the **National Coalition on Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation** in partnership with UNESCO and ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa. This coalition, formed under the "Social Media for Peace" project, aims to:

- **Promote and protect freedom of expression** on social media platforms in Kenya.
- **Address harmful online content**, particularly hate speech that incites violence, while upholding freedom of expression.
- **Ensure fair and transparent content moderation practices.**

National Coalition on Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation in Kenya coalition members in November 2023.

The [coalition](#) focuses on four critical areas: policy and legal reform, capacity building, research, and advocacy. This partnership demonstrates KICTANet's commitment to fostering collaborative efforts to address critical issues in the digital space and promote a more inclusive and equitable online environment for all Kenyans.

Policy Advocacy

In 2023, KICTANet actively engaged in a wide range of policy advocacy initiatives, focusing on critical areas such as cybersecurity, digital rights, gender equality, and data protection. These initiatives demonstrated KICTANet's strong commitment to advancing digital rights, promoting inclusive digital development, and shaping a more equitable and secure digital future for all Kenyans.

Mrs. Mercy Wanjau is the Secretary to the Cabinet of the Republic of Kenya, Dr Grace Githaiga, KICTANet and Bodo Immink Country Director at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH during a past event.

Key highlights include:

- **Digital Rights and Freedoms:** KICTANet advocated for online freedom and human rights, emphasising the importance of internet access for women's public participation. We also promoted a safer and more positive internet experience for children and young people, advocating for inclusive child online protection policies.
- **Cybersecurity:** KICTANet advocated for a more connected and informed approach to cybersecurity in Kenya, highlighting the need for robust regulations to ensure the responsible use of digital technologies.
- **Digital Inclusion:** KICTANet actively addressed the digital gender gap, advocating for strategies to bridge this divide. We also discussed solutions for expanding internet access in underserved communities, including contributing to discussions on expanding school internet connectivity.

- **Data Protection and Governance:** KICTANet played a crucial role in promoting data protection and governance. Key activities included launching [the Data Protectors podcast series to help SMEs comply with data protection regulations](#), submitting a technical brief on data protection regulations and emerging technologies to the Kenyan parliament, and facilitating discussions on the proposed Kenyan Cybercrime Regulations 2023. We advocated for [feminist data governance policies](#) to protect women online and emphasised the need for gender-inclusive data governance frameworks.
- **International Engagements:** KICTANet actively participated in international forums such as the 18th Internet Governance Forum (IGF), advocating for the [accessibility of online platforms for people with disabilities](#). We also pushed for the [use of ROAM-X indicators](#) as a crucial tool for addressing global and national standard-setting gaps to fulfil Goals 4, 5, 10, 16, and 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and highlighted the need for a conducive environment for ICT growth at the [Kenya Fibre Data Summit.](#) KICTANet's participation at the IGF demonstrates its unwavering commitment to building a more inclusive and equitable digital ecosystem.

Capacity Building

In the year, we focused on building capacity within various sectors and communities, commitment to empowering individuals and organizations with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the evolving digital landscape effectively and responsibly.

Participants during the Training on Online Gender-Based Violence for the Law Enforcement Sector in Nairobi in a group photo.

Key initiatives included:

- **Empowering Women and Civil Society:** We trained women on leveraging ICTs for public participation and conducted workshops for social justice organizations in Tanzania on navigating the digital landscape.
- **Data Protection and Cybersecurity**: A podcast series was launched to assist SMEs in complying with data protection regulations. Furthermore, training sessions were conducted for human rights defenders on cybersecurity best practices. KICTANet launched the B-Tech Africa Project and the Data Protectors Podcast to share knowledge and best practices on data protection and technology use.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration:** KICTANet actively participated in the 8th edition of Kenya School of Internet Governance (KeSIG) bringing 80 new voices into the internet governance space and organized a workshop on Women's Public Participation, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration within the digital rights ecosystem. The school received 343 applications, selected 79 participants (53% male, 47% female), and achieved an impressive 99% total completion rate.

- **Workshops & Events:** KICTANet organized workshops on online safety, women's empowerment through technology, and navigating the digital landscape for social justice organizations. We also hosted film screenings and discussions on online gender-based violence and cyberbullying. (Below, a panel discussion on the film screening "Act of Love" and on the potential of technology to create safe online spaces for mothers.)

Research

In the year under review, KICTANet conducted research to inform policy discussions and enhance understanding of the digital landscape in Kenya. Research as a key pillar, shows KICTANet's commitment to evidence-based advocacy and its dedication to generating knowledge that can inform policy decisions and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable digital space for all Kenyans. Key research activities included:

- **Digital Accessibility:** We conducted a study and launched a scorecard to assess the accessibility of government websites for persons with disabilities, highlighting areas for improvement and advocating for inclusive digital services.
- **Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV):** KICTANet released a report titled *"Unmasking The Trolls: Research on Online Gender-Based Violence in Kenya,"* providing valuable insights into the prevalence and impact of OGBV in the country.
- **Cybersecurity and Data Protection:** KICTANet submitted a review of the Kenyan government's proposed cybercrime regulations, providing expert analysis and recommendations. Additionally, we published a report on the potential implications of the Kenyan Cybercrime Regulations 2023, contributing to informed public discourse on this critical issue.

Highlights of Publications

Reports

KICTANet Technology Election Observer Mission Final Report. During the election, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) cleared 16,098 candidates to compete for six main elective positions across the countrys' 291 constituencies in 47 counties. KICTANet observed elections in various polling stations in 21 counties, focusing on technology aspects.
The report summarizes the key findings of the technology election observation mission during Kenya's general election on August 9, 2022.

Unmasking The Trolls: Research on Online Gender-Based Violence in Kenya. This report explores Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) in Kenya, focusing on how it impacts marginalized groups. It uses surveys and focus groups to examine the nature and Prevalence; the harmful physical and emotional effects on victims, including mental health issues and social isolation; the reasons behind OGBV acts, ranging from personal vendettas to political aims and the existing laws and policies relevant to addressing OGBV online.
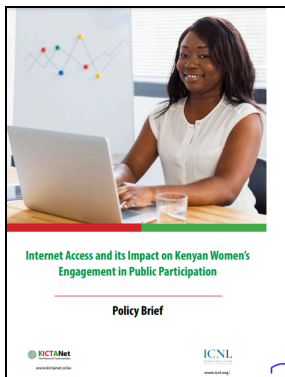
The Kenya School of Internet Governance Impact Study Report (2016-2022):
This report examines the impact and success stories of the Kenya School of Internet Governance (KeSIG) from 2016 to 2021.

KeSIG's growing alumni network is a powerful testament to the program's profound impact. These individuals are evidence of the program's success in fostering a new generation of Internet Governance leaders.

Policy Briefs

Internet Access and its Impact on Kenyan Women's Engagement in Public Participation. Bridging the Digital Gender Divide in Kenya.

Kenya aims to close the gap in women's access to technology and participation in public life.
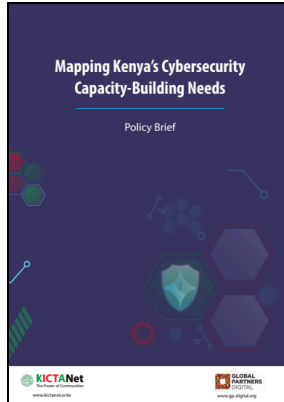
This report, through the efforts of KICTANet and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law. (ICNL), explores challenges and opportunities for greater inclusion.

KICTANet Accessibility of Kenya Government Websites to Persons with Disabilities- ScoreCard 2023:

The assessment aimed to empower persons with disabilities in Kenya by ensuring their access to ICT and incorporating their lived experiences into ICT policy.

Publicly accessible information remains consistent to promote equitable access to online services, aligned with Kenya's Constitution (2010), Article 35, which guarantees the right to access information as a fundamental human right.

Mapping Kenya's Cybersecurity Capacity-Building Need 2023:

This policy brief highlighted the urgent demand for enhancing cybersecurity capabilities in Kenya.

It identifies specific needs and offers key recommendations to stakeholders for effective capacity-building initiatives.

Kenya's Cyber Diplomacy at the UN – Policy Brief

This policy brief examined cyber diplomacy advancements at the UN, particularly the Open-Ended Working Group. (OEWG) on information security, concluding in March 2021.

It explored power dynamics and Kenya's strategic positioning within global cybersecurity efforts.

Submissions

1. KICTANet Weighed in on Kenyan Cybercrime Regulations KICTANet submitted a review of the Kenyan government's proposed "Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes" regulations in response to the call for input on The Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes (Critical Information Infrastructure and Cybercrime Management) Regulations 2023.

2. **Brief on the ODPC registration process and independence of data protection authorities**: KICTANet's report helped Kenya implement its 2019 Data Protection Act. It offers technical guidance on registering data handlers and explains how this law interacts with new technologies. This aims to build Kenya's expertise in regulating data privacy as technology evolves. The report focuses on two key areas: 1) clarifying the difference between registering for data handling and complying with the law, and 2) ensuring the independence of data protection authorities.

3. **Memorandum on The Draft Kenya Information and Communication Act Amendment Bill, 2023:** KICTANet submitted its feedback on Kenya's proposed amendments to the Information and Communications Act (2023).

Our Partners and Collaborators