



ZAINA FOUNDATION

BULLETIN

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1. The State of Digital Rights and Inclusion in Tanzania Ahead of the 2025 Elections

As Tanzania approaches its 2025 general elections, the digital landscape remains both a space of opportunity and a frontier of struggle. Digital platforms have become essential for civic participation, information sharing, and advocacy yet they are also increasingly vulnerable to threats such as disinformation, online gender-based violence, surveillance, and internet disruptions.

While internet access has expanded across the country, significant digital divides persist, especially among women, rural communities, and marginalized groups. Many citizens remain excluded from fully engaging in the digital economy due to limited digital literacy, affordability barriers, and unequal access to devices and connectivity.

For women in particular, online spaces have not always been safe or inclusive. Female journalists, activists, and politicians continue to face harassment, gendered disinformation, and targeted attacks designed to silence their voices in public debates. These patterns often intensify during election periods, when political tensions and misinformation campaigns peak.

Additionally, concerns about internet shutdowns and restrictions on online expression loom large ahead of the elections. Previous experiences in Tanzania and across Africa have shown how such disruptions can undermine transparency, limit citizens' access to information, and hinder democratic participation. In this context, protecting internet freedom and digital rights is not just a technological issue, it is a matter of governance, accountability, and human rights.

Against this backdrop, Zaina Foundation continues to stand at the forefront of the movement for digital inclusion, gender equality, and online safety, ensuring that women and marginalized voices are not left behind in shaping Tanzania's democratic future.

2. About Zaina Foundation

Our work focuses on four key areas:

⊙ **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG):** Leveraging technology-driven approaches to prevent and respond to both online and offline gender-based violence.

⊙ **Digital Rights and Inclusion:** Promoting equitable access to digital opportunities and advocating for policies that uphold freedom of expression, privacy, online safety, and internet freedom—especially ahead of elections in Tanzania.

⊙ **Research and Advocacy:** Generating evidence and influencing policy on key digital rights issues such as disinformation, internet shutdowns, and digital safety during elections.

⊙ **Capacity Building:** Strengthening the digital resilience of at-risk women and human rights defenders through training on data protection, online safety, and secure digital engagement.

Through its integrated programs, Zaina Foundation amplifies women's voices, strengthens civil society engagement, and builds networks that bridge the digital gender gap in Tanzania and beyond.

Zaina Foundation is a women-led organization based in Tanzania that leverages technology and advocacy to advance digital rights, gender equality, and social justice.

The Foundation works to empower women and marginalized communities to participate safely and meaningfully in the digital space.

3. Regional and Global Engagement: Zaina Foundation at FIFAfrica 2025, Windhoek, Namibia

In September 2025, Zaina Foundation proudly participated in the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFAfrica) held in Windhoek, Namibia. The Foundation was represented by its team who contributed to discussions on gender, technology, and digital governance.

During the forum, Zaina Foundation shared insights on advocating for internet freedom ahead of Tanzania's 2025 elections, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding women's voices online and building coalitions to counter disinformation and online violence.

The participation also strengthened partnerships with other African digital rights organizations, reinforcing our commitment to regional collaboration in advancing an open, secure, and inclusive internet for all.

4. Building Digital Resilience Ahead of the Elections: New Initiatives

As part of our pre-election digital rights program, Zaina Foundation has launched several targeted capacity-building initiatives designed to strengthen the digital safety and participation of women and human rights defenders in Tanzania.

A. Capacity Building for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) on Electoral Laws and Digital Rights

Ahead of the 2025 elections, Zaina Foundation has been training Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) on Tanzania's electoral laws and their intersection with digital rights and freedom of expression. These sessions equip WHRDs with the knowledge to monitor electoral processes, advocate for fairness, and use digital platforms responsibly and securely. The training also highlights legal protections and reporting mechanisms for women facing harassment or rights violations during elections.

B. Internet Shutdown Preparedness Training

Given the regional trend of internet disruptions during elections, Zaina Foundation has conducted specialized Internet Shutdown Preparedness Trainings for WHRDs, journalists, and civil society actors. These workshops focus on digital contingency planning, use of circumvention tools, and community-based response strategies to ensure that information flow and advocacy efforts continue even under restrictive conditions.

The initiative aims to empower participants to defend connectivity as a democratic right and to document and report digital restrictions should they occur.

C. Gender Disinformation Training for Women Journalists and Politicians

Zaina Foundation has also initiated Gender Disinformation Trainings targeting women journalists, politicians, and media practitioners.

These trainings explore the tactics and narratives used to undermine women in public life, providing participants with skills to identify, verify, and counter online disinformation.

Participants also learn about AI-assisted fact-checking tools, digital storytelling, and strategies to build positive narratives that promote women's leadership and participation in politics.

5. Online Advocacy and Grassroots Engagement

Complementing its capacity-building initiatives, Zaina Foundation has coordinated a nationwide online advocacy campaign led by digital rights members, journalists, and influencers under the theme "Digital Integrity for Gender Equality." The campaign raises awareness on gendered disinformation, online safety, and women's political participation, reaching thousands of social media users across Tanzania. Through creative digital storytelling and evidence-based messaging, the campaign challenges online misogyny and promotes responsible digital citizenship ahead of the 2025 elections.

Beyond online spaces, Zaina Foundation continues to engage marginalized communities in Arusha and Zanzibar, including the Maasai women and youth, integrating digital rights education into local conversations on climate change adaptation and resilience. By connecting technology, human rights, and environmental justice, the Foundation empowers these communities to use digital tools for advocacy, livelihood improvement, and collective action against the impacts of climate change.

6. Partnerships and Acknowledgments

Zaina Foundation's impact is made possible through the support and collaboration of our local, regional, and international partners. We extend our deepest gratitude to Access Now, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), WilDAF, UN Women, the United Nations, SIDA, the U.S. Embassy, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Numun Fund, CIPESA, Paradigm Initiative, Women's Fund Tanzania, and TAMWA for their continued partnership, solidarity, and investment in advancing gender equality and digital rights in Tanzania.

Together, we are shaping a feminist, inclusive, and rights-based digital future—where every woman and girl can thrive safely, freely, and fully online and offline.