ZAINA FOUNDATION

January 2026 Bulletin

Zaina Foundation
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Building a Safer, More Inclusive Digital Future for Women and Communities in Tanzania and Beyond

Zaina Foundation is a non-profit organization established in 2017 and registered under Tanzania's NGO Act of 2002. The organization is dedicated to advancing digital rights and digital inclusion, with a strong focus on empowering women in technology and expanding civic space through the use of digital tools and innovation.
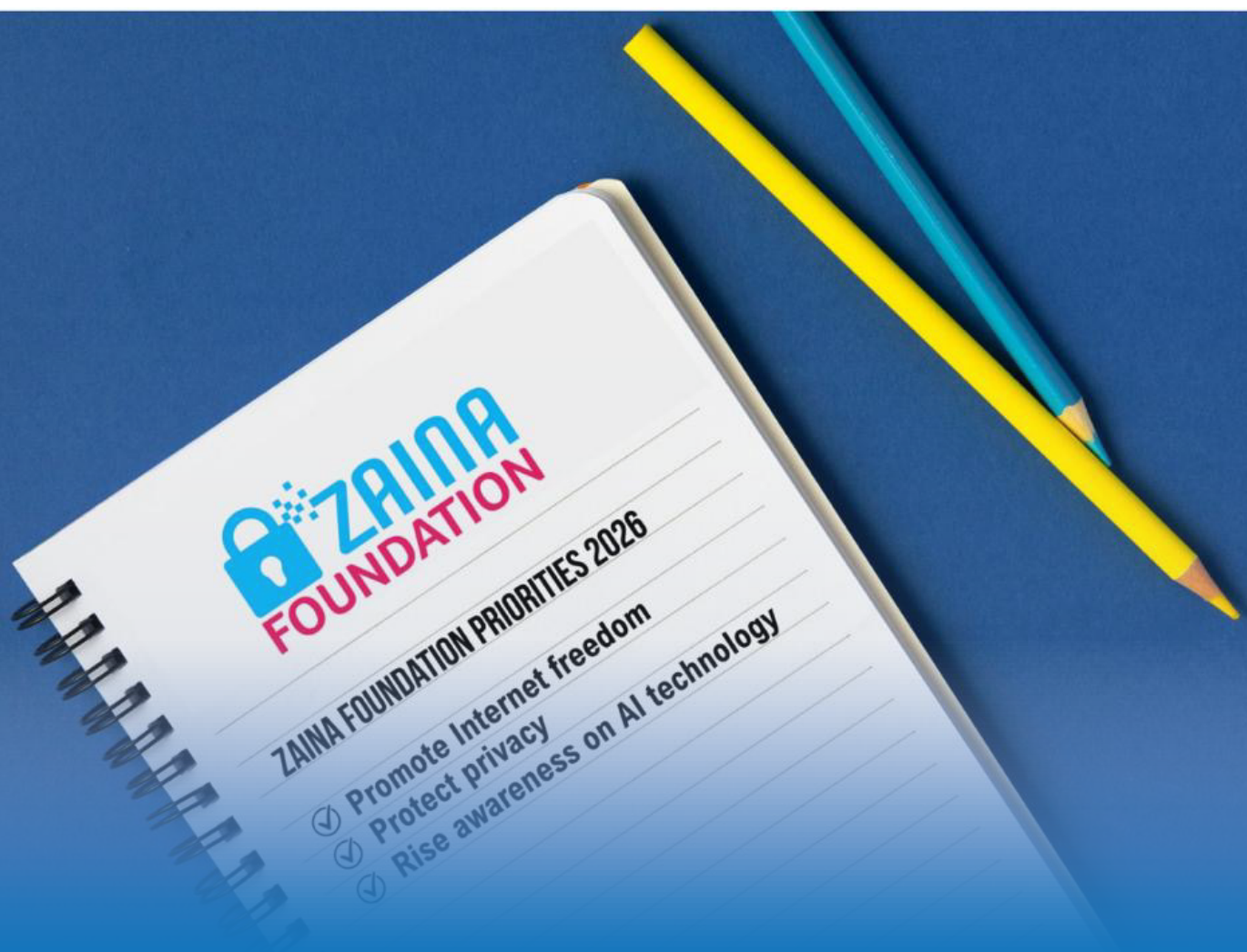
Through its work, Zaina Foundation seeks to ensure that marginalized communities can safely access, use, and benefit from digital technologies in ways that promote participation, equality, and social justice.

To achieve this mission, Zaina Foundation delivers capacity-building programs for women, journalists, and human rights defenders, strengthening digital resilience, online safety, and leadership in the digital space.

The organization also localizes open-source digital tools by translating resources into Kiswahili, making technology more accessible and inclusive for Swahili-speaking communities.

In addition, Zaina Foundation actively advocates for internet freedom, addresses gender-based disinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence, promotes inclusive internet governance, conducts research on digital rights and climate justice, and engages in policy advocacy to advance gender equity, democratic participation, and digital freedoms in Tanzania.

As digital technologies continue to transform communication, governance, and economic participation across Tanzania and East Africa, Zaina Foundation is strengthening its commitment to protecting digital rights as a core component of human rights. Our strategic priorities focus on advancing internet freedom, safeguarding privacy and data rights, and building inclusive capacity around artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. Through community training, policy advocacy, research, and public awareness, we work to ensure that women and marginalized communities can safely access digital spaces, participate in decision-making, and benefit from innovation without fear of exclusion, surveillance, or digital harm.

Alongside these efforts, Zaina Foundation is expanding coalition and movement-building at national, regional, and global levels. Through leadership in the Tanzania Digital Rights Coalition, active participation in the #KeepItOn Coalition, and engagement within the APC community, we amplify collective advocacy against internet shutdowns, strengthen coordinated responses to digital threats, and contribute local perspectives to global digital policy discussions. Together, these strategic actions position Zaina Foundation to build safer, more inclusive, and rights-based digital ecosystems that empower communities and strengthen democratic participation in Tanzania and beyond.

3. ZF IN ACTION 2026 - THE YEAR OF REFORMS

A. Policy Dialogue in Dar es salaa

In early January, Zaina Foundation convened a one-day policy dialogue in Dar es Salaam, bringing together 25 participants, including digital rights advocates, board members, activists, human rights defenders, technologists, academics, and digital influencers. The meeting focused on identifying gaps in Tanzania's digital policy and legal framework following the 2025 General Election, with the aim of strengthening protections for human rights and securing a free, open, and accessible internet ahead of the 2030 elections. Participants engaged in critical discussions on how existing laws can be reformed to prevent future internet shutdowns and safeguard civic space in the digital era.

As a key outcome, participants collaboratively developed a policy advocacy paper highlighting priority area for reform.

Among the laws identified for urgent review in 2026 were the Cybercrimes Act of 2015, the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations of 2022, and the Media Services Act of 2015.

Reflecting on the importance of the dialogue, Janet, one of the participants, shared, "This meeting gave us a clear platform to speak openly about how digital laws are affecting citizens' freedoms. Reforming these policies is critical to protecting human rights and preventing future internet shutdowns."

Amury added, "For the first time, different actors — technologists, activists, and legal experts — came together to develop concrete policy solutions. This collaboration is essential if Tanzania is to secure a free and open digital space for future generations."

B.   From Climate Vulnerability to Digital Empowerment: Women Seaweed Farmers Amplifying Change in Zanzibar

For years, women seaweed farmers in Kizimkazi, Zanzibar, have watched climate change slowly reshape their livelihoods. Rising sea levels, unpredictable rainfall, prolonged droughts, and warming ocean temperatures have reduced seaweed yields and threatened household incomes. For many women, these environmental impacts have meant growing economic insecurity, limited options, and little access to information or platforms to raise their concerns.

In January, with support from Zaina Foundation's project "Amplifying Change: Feminist, Environmental Voice and Digital Rights," 25 marginalized women came together for a two-day workshop designed to strengthen climate resilience through digital empowerment. The training combined feminist leadership, environmental awareness, and digital rights education, equipping participants with practical tools to access climate information, document environmental impacts, connect to markets, and advocate for their communities.

For Mama Rahma, the training marked a turning point. "Climate change has made our seaweed farms unpredictable and our income unstable," she shared. "Learning how to use digital tools gives us hope to access information, share our challenges, and find better opportunities for our families."

Fatma echoed this transformation: "Before this workshop, I did not know that digital rights could help us protect our voices and livelihoods. Now we can tell our stories, connect with others, and advocate for solutions to the environmental problems affecting our community."

Today, these women are not only adapting to environmental challenges — they are becoming digital advocates for climate justice in their communities. Through access to digital knowledge and rights-based tools, they are strengthening resilience, amplifying their voices, and shaping sustainable solutions for the future.

B. Zaina Foundation Launches Cybersecurity Initiative to Protect At-Risk Women in Tanzania

Zaina Foundation is proud to announce the launch of its Cybersecurity Initiative in Tanzania, a transformative program designed to create safer digital spaces for women and marginalized communities across the country. As online harassment, surveillance, and cyberbullying continue to rise, particularly against women journalists, activists, and human rights defenders, this initiative responds directly to the urgent need for digital safety, resilience, and rights-based protection.

The project will deliver cybersecurity awareness training, digital safety skills, and ongoing mentorship for at-risk women, including journalists, activists, women with disabilities, rural women, and marginalized groups. By 2026, the initiative aims to reach and empower at least 300 women to confidently protect their digital identities, secure their communications, and participate freely in digital spaces without fear of abuse or harm.

Reflecting on the impact of online violence, Oliver, a woman journalist who has experienced cyberbullying, shared:

"The harassment I face online is meant to silence me and make me afraid to report the truth. This initiative gives women like me the tools and confidence to protect ourselves and continue speaking out without fear."

Another journalist added, "Cyberbullying affects our mental health, our work, and our safety. Learning how to secure our accounts and respond to online attacks is life-changing — it allows us to keep doing our jobs with dignity and strength."

Through this initiative, Zaina Foundation is not only addressing immediate digital threats but also building long-term resilience, leadership, and advocacy among women across Tanzania. With donor support, this program will continue expanding its reach and impact — ensuring that digital spaces become environments of empowerment rather than harm.

Thank You Note

Thank you to all our supporters and partners for standing with Zaina Foundation in advancing digital rights and empowering women across Tanzania. Together, we are building safer and more inclusive digital spaces — and we invite you to continue supporting our mission to expand impact and protect communities in the digital age.

ZAINA FOUNDATION

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