



African Internet Rights Alliance

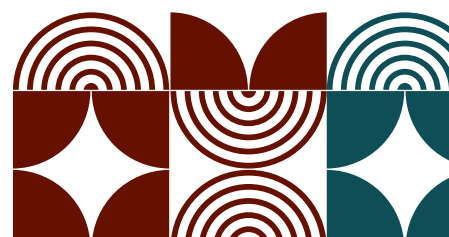
2023

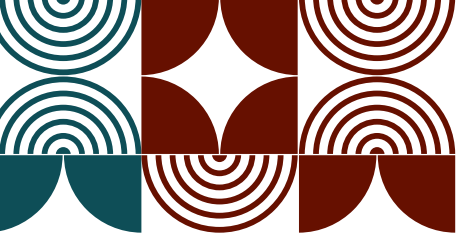
Annual Report



2023

Annual Report





MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATING ORGANISATION

Dear Members, Partners, and Stakeholders,

I am glad to present this annual report on behalf of the Coordinating Organization, Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). As we review the past year as an Alliance and look forward to 2024, CIPESA is truly inspired by AIRA's collective efforts, resilience, and achievements.

CIPESA's two-time tenure coordinating the activities of the African Internet Rights Alliance has allowed us to witness the unwavering commitment of our members to building a stronger and unified voice to champion digital rights and freedoms on the continent. AIRA members are not only dedicated to their individual and unique causes but to the strengthening of the digital rights space in Africa. This is what 2023 was made of - diverse initiatives, collaborative projects, impactful programs and collective strength. From the successful execution of our quarterly editions of AIRA Talks to the insightful panel sessions at major convening to our collective research report, each achievement is a testament to Members' enthusiasm in advancing the cause of digital rights.

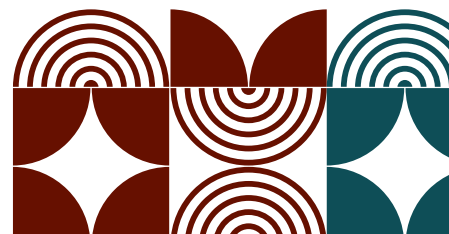
I cannot but acknowledge the profound contribution and invaluable support of our strategic partners such as Ford Foundation who have in no small way amplified the efforts of this community. Thank you for your continued commitment to AIRA.

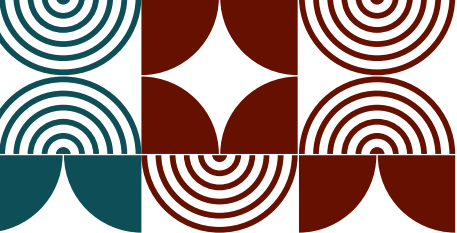
May this report serve as a source of inspiration, reflection, and a reminder of the profound impact we can achieve when we are united by a common purpose.

Warm regards,

Ashnah Kafemera

for CIPESA,
Coordinating Organization of AIRA 2023





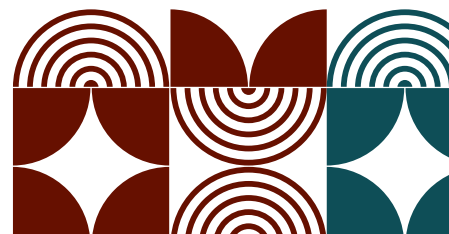
OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

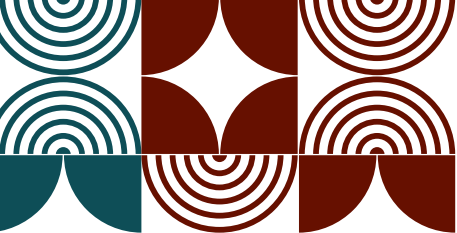
2023 was the inaugural year of operationalizing our visionary Strategic Plan (“the Plan”) which spans from 2023 to 2028. Driven by our three (3) strategic objectives as contained in the Plan, we were able to truly dedicate ourselves to a stronger digital rights space in Africa through our collaborations, peer support, collective action and partnerships. As a refresher and for our guest readers, our strategic objectives are

- To foster peer support and/or collaboration amongst organisations working on digital rights and internet freedom in Africa.
- To promote collective action on regressive digital rights policy and practice.
- To provide a platform to nurture global partnerships to enhance digital rights in Africa

Recognizing the collective strength inherent in unity, this year we made tremendous progress building a dynamic network where shared insights, experiences, and resources could flourish. We also transcended regional borders by providing a robust platform to nurture global partnerships and drew on the strengths of international allies who share our commitment to a free and open internet.

In setting forth these strategic objectives, we have laid the foundation for an exciting five-year roadmap and we look forward to catalyzing positive change and progress for digital rights in Africa.



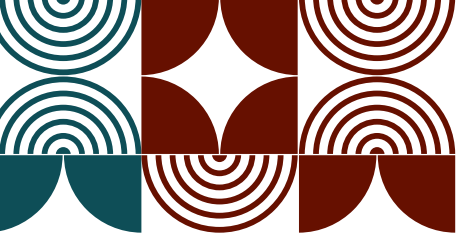


1.0 AIRA: A COMMUNITY FOR COLLECTIVE REFLECTION

This year, AIRA continued to cultivate an environment conducive to learning and knowledge exchange for its members through our bi-monthly teleconference calls as well as our sub-committee meetings. A community for collective reflection is an important element of why we exist and this year, we continued to encourage active participation and facilitate peer learning among our members. What this looked like was each member owning space to spotlight its activities and lessons as well as the problems and challenges faced within its program implementation. In effect, we enhanced problem-solving within the Alliance as each member was able to inspire innovative solutions and strategies that may not have been apparent on an individual-organisation level. Additionally, this environment improved our identification of trends, patterns and emerging digital rights issues giving each member a broader perspective to our shared goals for digital rights on the continent.

The sub-committees; Communications & Engagement Committee, Policy Committee and Capacity Building Committee also met to discuss more pointed and strategic aspects of our work and allowed for each organisation to contribute its strengths to the collective force of AIRA. Examples of some of the committee outputs include the topics for our AIRA Talks (see below), panelist suggestions, feedback on AIRA communications plan and strategy, and identification of elections as a critical entry point for collective engagement.





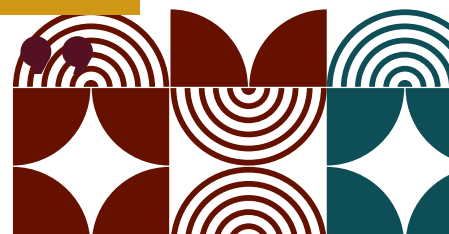
2.0 AIRA TALKS

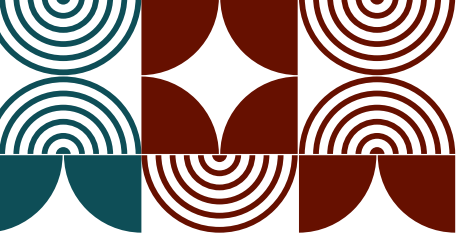
This year, we hosted 5 AIRA Talks that were of immense value to our community. Launched in 2021, AIRA Talks serve as a quarterly platform for knowledge sharing on key issues affecting digital rights on the continent. It was further apparent to us this year that AIRA has, not just the convening power, but also the strategic positioning to discuss these key issues. We hosted conversations on “Digital Rights in the 2023 Nigeria Elections” (February), “Generative AI: Ethical, Social, Economic, and Policy Implications for Africa”, (June), “Gender Equity, Data Governance and Digital Transformation” (July), “Protecting Digital Rights During the Upcoming Zimbabwean Elections” (August) and “Digital Rights in the drive for a Sustainable Society: Navigating the Intersection between Climate Justice and Digital Rights.” (October).

These webinars provided a platform for open discussions on important digital rights topics and a profound opportunity to engage key stakeholders and contribute to shaping collective strategies for addressing regressive digital rights policies and practices. In selecting panelists and resource persons for these conversations, we took deliberate steps to ensure inclusivity and diversity specifically improving our engagement with women digital rights experts.



Out of 23 AIRA Talks panelists, 14 were female. We noticed that as a result, our AIRA Talks presented more diverse perspectives and were enhanced in quality.

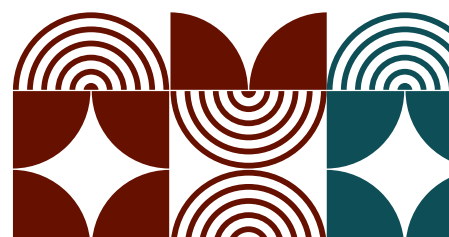


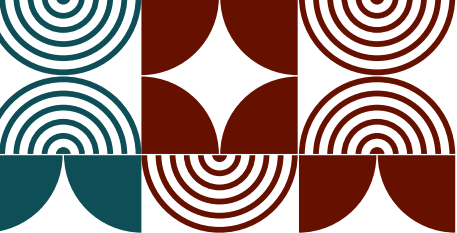


3.0 RESEARCH ON POLITICAL MICROTARGETING



This year, we successfully produced a meticulously researched research paper titled "**Contextualising Political Advertising Policy to Political Microtargeting in Nigerian Elections**" with technical support from one of AIRA's members, Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT). The paper evaluated the implications of microtargeting in the context of Nigerian elections and was launched at the "Forum on Internet Freedom (FIFA), a Digital Rights convening organised by another member, CIPESA. Launched during a panel discussion by AIRA members on political microtargeting, the paper is available for download and review on our website and is available to strengthen advocacy through evidence collection and awareness, in line with our alliance objectives.



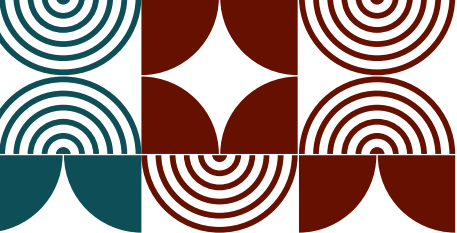


4.0 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER COALITIONS/ORGANISATIONS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

AIRA does not exist or operate in a silo. Our overall goal demands that we collaborate and enter strategic partnerships not only with members but even with non-member organisations and coalitions. This year, we joined forces with other networks to address relevant digital rights issues. For instance, AIRA partnered with Digital Action to co-host a session at FIFA Africa to discuss ideas and identify opportunities and tools for more effective collaboration and engagement by Digital Action Africa Regional Members in 2024.

Over the year, we interacted with other organisations such as Global Witness, Amnesty International, GIZ, and Freedom House rubbing minds over tools, projects and opportunities. Amnesty International's Strategic Litigation team also participated in an AIRA bi-monthly call to share their work on strategic litigation. Global Witness and LRC deepened their partnership on platform accountability. For our AIRA Talks, we also ensured to welcome the voices and contributions of other organisations on our panels. Of worthy mention are Alexandra Pardal of Digital Action, Elizabeth Sutterlin of Freedom House, Immaculate Morang'a of Climate Change Lawyers Cafe, Lauritta Boniface of Ecocykle Development Foundation, Kenneth Magwaza of ZimRights and Juan Carlos Lara of Derechos Digitales.



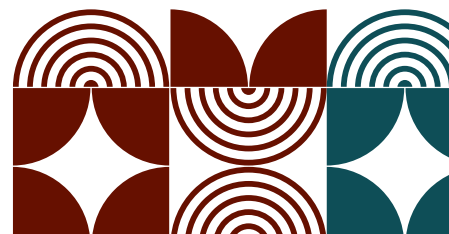


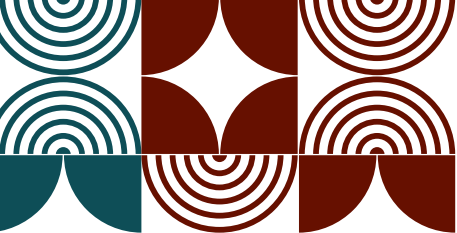
5.0 ENHANCING MEMBERS' VISIBILITY

In our commitment to enhancing the visibility of our members, we successfully disseminate monthly issues of the AIRA bulletin as well as weekly internal updates. These regular updates served as a comprehensive overview of the activities, initiatives, projects, opportunities, and programs undertaken by AIRA members. The AIRA's Monthly Bulletin is uniquely positioned as one of the few places to find a consistent update on the work of key digital rights organisations on the continent. Contributing to the overarching narrative of the impact of digital rights organisations in Africa, we are delighted to have reached a broader audience this year and showcased the collective efforts and noteworthy achievements of our members.

AIRA Bulletin

**UPDATES FROM LEADING DIGITAL RIGHTS
ORGANISATIONS IN AFRICA**





6.0 INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

This year, the AIRA administration team grew as we hired a Coordinator, Adeboro Odunlami, in June 2023. The Coordinator has so far played a pivotal role in ensuring that our programs and events run smoothly, facilitating communication among stakeholders, and overseeing the planning and execution of all activities.

Furthermore, we have been able to effectively manage the smooth transitions of the Oversight Group as well as new staff of our member organisations and their role within the Alliance. We also developed a more robust communications strategy that positions AIRA as a Thought Leader, that strives to build a community for collective action. This included the development of a plan that has informed more consistent messaging and engagement on key social media platforms.

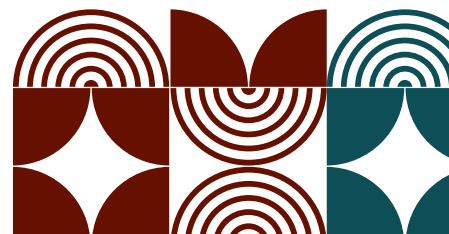
7.0. OUR GROWING ALLIANCE

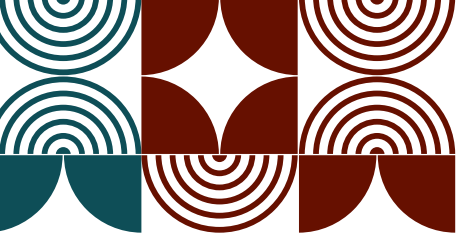
First, we congratulate all AIRA members who have moved on to new opportunities within other organisations. We wish you continued success and fulfillment in your new endeavour.

This year AIRA welcomed the following individuals to the AIRA community:

- Angela Minayo (Digital Rights and Policy Programmes Officer, ARTICLE 19)
- Oluwaseun Adepoju (Managing Partner, CcHUB)
- Bridgette Ndlovu (Partnerships and Engagement officer, Paradigm Initiative)
- Tricia Gloria Nabaye (Engagement and Advocacy Coordinator, Pollicy)
- Joshua Kitili (Research Assistant, CIPIT)

We are always delighted to welcome seasoned advocates to the AIRA community.





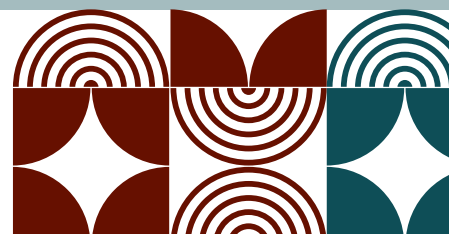
8.0 A HEARTFELT MESSAGE TO ALBERTO CERDA

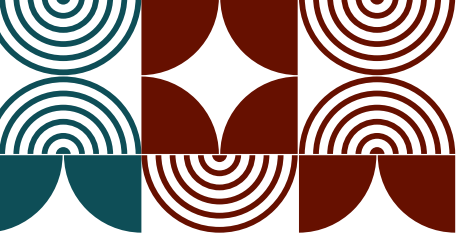


The formation of our alliance cannot be discussed without remembering the profound role played by Alberto Cerda Silva, a remarkable individual and a true advocate who supported many other Digital Rights Organisations and Communities in the Global Majority.

Alberto's time as program officer with Ford Foundation came to an end this year but his impact will last a lifetime. Thank you Alberto for your unwavering support, guidance and dedication to AIRA over the past years. The grant provided by Ford Foundation under your stewardship has been instrumental in enabling us to make a meaningful impact on the continent - and we're certain that we speak not just for AIRA but for many other organisations. Your passion is apparent and you're an exceptional leader.

Alberto, thank you for being warm and approachable - every interaction was a pleasure! As you embark on a new chapter, we are excited for the opportunities for impact that lie ahead of you and we have no doubt that you will continue to leave an indelible mark everywhere you go!





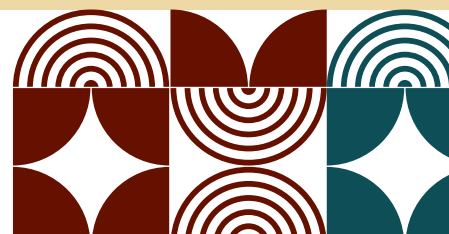
9.0 A ROUSING WELCOME TO MEHWISH ANSARI

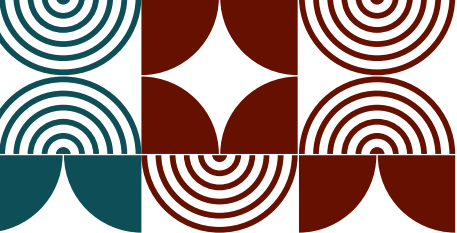


And now, it is our immense pleasure to welcome Mehwish Ansari, the incumbent Program Officer at Ford Foundation, into the AIRA community.

We are excited to embark on a new chapter with Mehwish! With her wealth of experience, background and impact in technology and human rights as well as in advocacy, we anticipate a rich and fruitful interaction.

Welcome Mehwish, we are confident that with you, we will not only sustain but elevate the momentum we have so far built as an Alliance.





10.0 WHAT OUR MEMBERS DID IN 2023

Amnesty International



Amnesty International Kenya hosted the State of Freedoms and Rights in Kenya 2023 Conference. The conference is designed to build Amnesty Kenya delegates' and members' vision and capacities. At this event, they launched their Strategic Framework 2024 – 2028, which acts as a roadmap for advancing their Human Rights advocacy work. Watch highlights of the event [here](#).



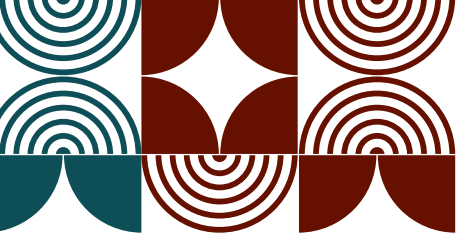
ARTICLE 19 EASTERN AFRICA

ARTICLE 19 launched its annual report on Freedom of Expression - [The Global Expression Report \(GxR\)](#). The report is an examination of the trends in the right to freedom of expression and information – globally, regionally, and nationally. The report gave the Sub-Saharan region an Expression Score of 43 and a Human Score of 45, both of which have held steady over the last 2 decades.

BudgIT

BudgIT launched its annual State of States Report which is an in-depth assessment of the long-term fiscal sustainability of Nigeria's 36 states. The report looks at the ability of states to raise and manage their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), spend effectively on capital projects, and manage their debt, among other things. View the report [here](#)





CcHUB/i-HUB

Co-creation Hub/i-Hub CEO hosted Bill Gates in a wide-ranging conversation about unleashing the power of youth in science and innovation to advance Africa's future. They spoke at a forum with students and young innovators from Nigeria and across Africa. Gates discussed how science and innovation can accelerate positive change and contribute to a brighter future for Africa. He said the voice of the Nigerian youth was critical to ensure that the resources of the country could be shifted to investments in infrastructure, health and education. Watch the full session [here](#), and read an article about the event [here](#).



CIPESA

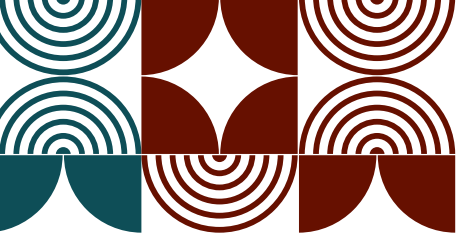
CIPESA hosted the 10th edition of the [Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa \(FIFAfrica\) 2023](#) in Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania. The conference coincided with the International Day for Universal Access to Information to increase awareness of the right to information. The opening ceremony of was co-hosted alongside the African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance – and the Ministry of Information, Communication & Information Technology. CIPESA also unveiled a special edition of the State of Internet Freedom in Africa report. Access it [here](#).

CIPIT

CIPIT conducted a number of laudable research on Artificial Intelligence in Africa including a Policy Brief on the [“State of Artificial Intelligence in Africa 2023”](#), [“AI Assistive Technologies for Persons with Disabilities in Africa”](#), [“The New Wave of eHealth: AI and Privacy Concerns? A Case Study of Kenya”](#) and [“The Impact of AI on Women’s Job Loss in Africa Banking Industry - Focus on Kenya”](#).



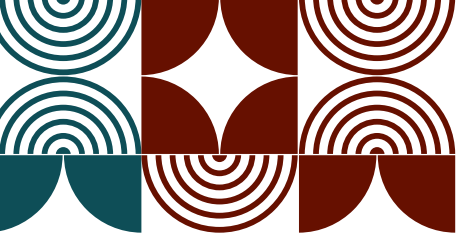
Strathmore University
Centre for Intellectual Property and
Information Technology Law



KICTANet hosted the 17th edition of the Kenya Internet Governance Forum (KeIGF) under the theme, “The Internet We Want – Empowering All Kenyan People.” The IGF week involved discussions on public policy issues related to the Internet. A youth IGF was convened a day before the event to bring in the voices of young Kenyans to the national discussions. The 8th edition of the Kenya School of Internet Governance (KeSIG), a capacity-building initiative to empower to engage, contribute and participate in ICT policy-making discourse meaningfully was also convened with 73 students this year. There was also a Children IGF organized by the Watoto Watch Network. Read about KeSIG [here](#). It concluded in a High-Level Panel Session titled “The Internet We Want – Empowering All Kenyan People” where stakeholders in the technology sector were called upon to join forces and tackle pressing challenges in the industry. Watch the sessions from the KeIGF [here](#), as a roadmap for advancing their Human Rights advocacy work. Watch highlights of the event [here](#).



LRC partnered with Global Witness to carry out two profound investigations into Big Tech Accountability in curbing hate speech online. The [first](#) investigation was to test social media platforms’ detection of violent xenophobic hate content and the [second](#) was to test social media platforms’ detection of misogynistic hate speech. The findings were eye-opening and quite useful for advocacy especially in light of LRC’s role as part of the Steering Group for the Global Coalition for Tech Justice and its 2024 Year of Democracy campaign.



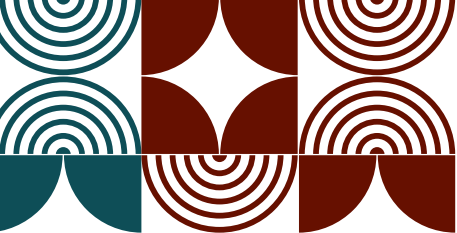
PARADIGM INITIATIVE

Paradigm Initiative hosted the 10th edition of the Digital Rights in Africa Forum 2023 (DRIF23) under the theme “Building a Sustainable Internet for All” in Nairobi, Kenya. DRIF23 facilitated crucial conversation and the creation of action plans to advance digital inclusion and rights in Africa. The event brought together representatives from the government, legislature, civil society, non-governmental organisations, activists, academia, the technical community, and the private sector.



POLLCY

Pollicy hosted DataFest, its annual event celebrating data science and its ever-evolving impact on the African continent. Held in Nairobi, Kenya under the theme “Turning the Data Tables: No Gender Equality in Tech AI without Data Equality,” the conference addressed the need to promote the intersectionality of gender and data and proposed practical solutions for addressing gender data and artificial intelligence (AI) bias in Africa.

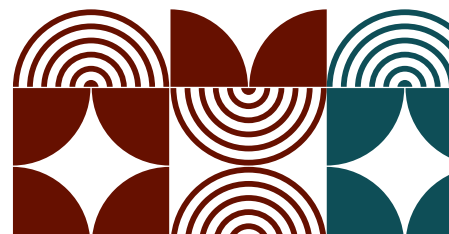


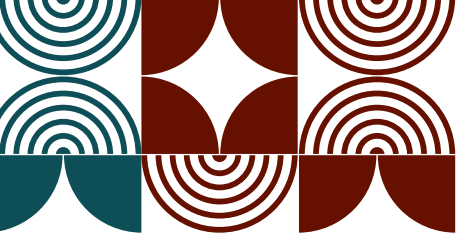
11.0 FUTURE OUTLOOK & UPCOMING INITIATIVES



As we look ahead to the upcoming year, AIRA is excited to unveil its plans and initiatives in furtherance of our commitment to advancing digital rights across Africa. We are pleased to announce the initiation of a series of thought-provoking AIRA Talks, featuring experts and thought leaders in the global digital rights space. These talks will delve into crucial topics spanning elections, gender, and artificial intelligence, offering a platform for in-depth discussions and insights that contribute to the ongoing discourse on digital rights in the region.

In addition to our AIRA Talks, we are gearing up to participate in prominent digital rights convenings, including the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF 24) and the Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFA24). Our alliance will actively engage in panel sessions, sharing our expertise and collaborating with industry leaders to shape the digital rights landscape on a broader scale.





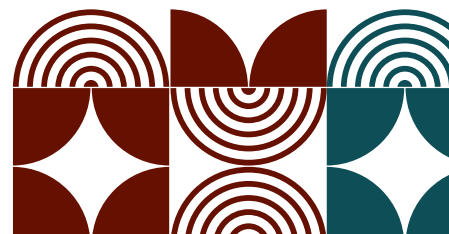
To maintain a regular channel of communication and celebration, we are committed to the continuation of our monthly bulletin. This bulletin will spotlight the achievements, activities, and opportunities within our community, ensuring that members stay informed and connected.

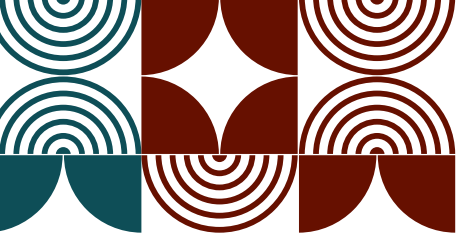
Furthermore, recognizing the evolving landscape of digital rights, AIRA is embarking on a research initiative focused on political microtargeting in the context of the upcoming South Africa elections.

As we close the year and look forward to the future, we remain committed to fostering knowledge, collaboration, and advocacy in the pursuit of a free and inclusive internet for all Africans.

Stay in touch

**SUBSCRIBE TO THE AIRA MONTHLY
BULLETIN**





12.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would be impossible to close the curtain on the year without giving our acknowledgements to those who made our collaborative efforts and accomplishments possible. Hence, with gratitude in our hearts, we extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has played a pivotal role in making this year a success.

First and foremost, we express our deepest gratitude to the Ford Foundation for its generous grant and institutional support, which has been the cornerstone of our achievements this year. Your support has empowered us to pursue our mission with dedication and impact.

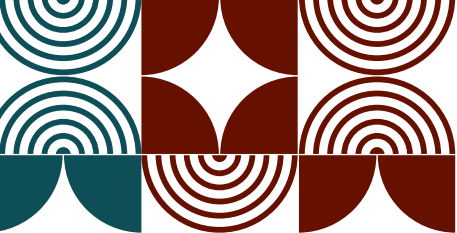
A heartfelt thank you also goes to all esteemed partners - to every organisation and network with which we collaborated. Gaining access to your projects and initiatives has not only enriched our work but also strengthened the collective impact we made.

To our Oversight Group, your strategic oversight has been invaluable. Your guidance has shaped our direction and ensured that we stay true to our mission and vision.

Special thanks to our Coordinating Organization, CIPESA, for your excellent support and tireless efforts in coordinating a seamless collaboration among our members.

And to the Fiscal Host, KICTANet, we extend our appreciation for managing our financial affairs with precision and transparency. A heartfelt thank you to the Facilitator, Ashanut Okille of Akijul, for your pivotal role in facilitating the Alliance and fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment.



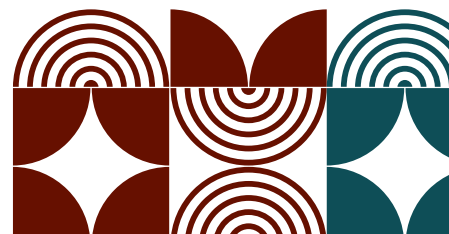


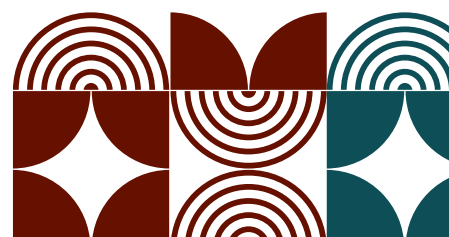
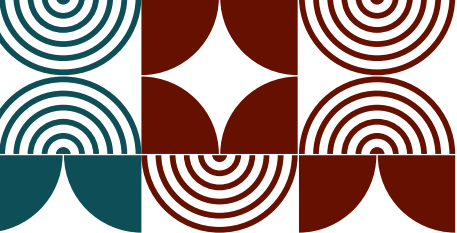
And to the Coordinator, for ensuring consistent information sharing, communication, consistent follow-up of activities, facilitating networking and managing communications.

To each and every member of AIRA, your passion, commitment, and contributions are the driving force behind our achievements. Together, we are building a community that is making a significant impact on digital rights in Africa.

Last but not least, we extend our gratitude to stakeholders working tirelessly to improve and uphold digital rights in Africa. Our shared commitment and your individual efforts to the ongoing work inspires hope.

As we reflect on the past year, we are geared up for an even better future - advancing digital rights on the African continent.





(page left intentionally blank)



African Internet Rights Alliance