



WEBINAR REPORT · APRIL 21, 2026

DIGITAL RIGHTS & GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

How Youth are Shaping the Future of Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

EVENT DETAILS

Duration:	1 Hour
Date:	April 21, 2026
Platform:	Google Meet
Organizers:	Nuru Trust Network · Youth Democracy Cohort
Moderator:	Mr. Kevin Waigwa

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report summarises the findings of the Digital Rights & Grassroots Democracy webinar, co-organised by Nuru Trust Network and the Youth Democracy Cohort. It captures key presentations, interactive discussions, youth-led solution ideas, and actionable recommendations for strengthening civic participation across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Risk Area	Description
Security Risks	Digital surveillance, internet shutdowns, and online harassment pose direct threats to youth activists engaging in civic work.
Information Integrity	Widespread misinformation and difficulty verifying the authenticity of information online undermine democratic participation.
Digital Divide	Persistent inequalities in connectivity, digital literacy, and tool access — particularly for rural and marginalised communities — limit inclusion.

2.3 Understanding Digital Rights

Digital rights were presented as the bedrock underpinning all grassroots democratic action. Two core pillars were identified:

■ Access & Expression	■ Privacy & Data Protection
The ability to reach social media platforms and access information freely — a prerequisite for informed civic engagement.	The ability to express oneself and organise without fear of surveillance, harassment, or retaliation from authorities.

Why it matters: Ensuring digital activism remains safe, inclusive, and effective requires robust protection of both pillars.

2.4 Comparative Insight on Digital Spaces (Democracy Index 2023)

A comparative analysis of digital environments across African countries revealed three distinct categories, each with implications for citizen empowerment:

Category	Example Countries	Characteristics
Contested Digital Spaces	Kenya, Morocco, Madagascar	Youth publish open data on government spending; governments closely monitor these spaces, creating tension between civic expression and state control.
Stable Digital Spaces	Namibia, Botswana, South Africa	Less government interference; strong civil society and citizen support create healthier democratic ecosystems.
Hybrid Regimes	Nigeria, Mauritania, Angola, Gabon, Cameroon, Chad, Libya, South Sudan	Digital participation is actively hindered by ruling regimes; mixed signals on press freedom complicate youth civic tech efforts.

Key finding: Stronger digital rights directly enable greater citizen participation, more peaceful transitions of power, and improved resilience against democratic backsliding.

2.5 Youth-Led Innovation in Action

Two platforms were highlighted as examples of youth-led digital activism:

Reddit — Young people use the platform to discuss issues, share civic content, vote on community concerns, and monitor government actions.

Wazi Data — Bridges the digital divide by providing equal access to technologies and enabling citizens to track budget usage in accessible formats.

3. INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

3.1 Live Poll Results

Participants scanned a QR code at the start of the session and responded to two live poll questions. Results provided a real-time snapshot of participants' digital civic engagement:

87%

Have used digital
tools for civic
engagement

vs 13% who have not

#1 Challenge

Misinformation &
verification
difficulty

Top barrier to online participation

3.2 Breakout Group Exercise

Participants were divided into five breakout groups, each tasked with the following prompt:

Design a simple tech-enabled solution or campaign that helps young people expose corruption and misinformation, reduce their impact, and strengthen local democracy. Consider safety, inclusion, and accountability.

Group Proposals

#EndMisinformation Campaign

- **Problem** Reducing misinformation spread on social media.
- **Solution** Advocacy campaign across Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok using the hashtag **#EndMisinformation**.
- **How** Town hall meetings combined with online petitions targeting youth, government officials, faith leaders, and community gatekeepers.
- **Safety** Share only factual information; operate within trusted networks and within the law.
- **Inclusion** Use videos, graphics with minimal text, and voice notes — accessible to persons with disabilities. Leave No One Behind principle.

AT THE SCENE

- **Problem** Exposing corruption through anonymous digital reporting.
- **Solution** Anonymous website with an anonymous tracker system to upload, verify, and amplify corruption evidence.
- **How** Upload campaign with existing information; participants refer others for cross-verification; once verified, campaigns are linked and amplified.
- **Safety** Static username and password only (no email); fully anonymous accounts; AI-guided verification system; account deactivation leaves no footprint.
- **Inclusion** API integration (e.g. Africa's Talking) for SMS-based registration using low data; single device accessible at grassroots level.

Youth Truth Initiative — Burundi

- **Problem** Low youth political participation in Burundi due to misinformation and unverified social media content.
- **Solution** Youth-led platform for accurate political information, fact-checking, and digital literacy training.
- **How** Train youth ambassadors in fact-checking; share verified information via social media, WhatsApp groups, and community radio; partner with trusted organisations and journalists.
- **Safety** Verify information before sharing; protect participant identities; moderate content to prevent hate speech; promote respectful dialogue.
- **Inclusion** Engage young men and women; include rural and urban youth; provide content in Kirundi, French, and Swahili; use radio for offline reach.

END ETHNIC VIOLENCE NOW

■ Problem	Misinformation fuelling ethnic violence and public panic.
■ Solution	Fact-checking campaign to reduce fear and panic by countering false narratives around ethnic conflict.
■ How	Primary channel: social media (Twitter, Facebook, TikTok); secondary channel: mainstream media (radio and TV).
■ Safety	Share only factual information; operate within a network of trusted and dependable individuals.
■ Inclusion	Leverage wide access to social media platforms for youth to view, comment, and engage in discussions.

SAFISHA RADA

■ Problem	Official government information is inaccessible or too complex for the public — hiding ongoing projects and potential corruption.
■ Solution	Digital campaign on social media for fast and simple dissemination of simplified government information.
■ How	Collect important information → add messaging on its relevance to everyday citizens → post easy-to-understand content. Attach official source documents.
■ Safety	Use a centralised person to disseminate information; maintain anonymity through popular, non-personal social media pages.
■ Inclusion	Use youth-dominated platforms (TikTok, Twitter); keep messaging simple for rural/urban and low-data users; fact-check all information.

4. KEY OUTCOMES & INSIGHTS

4.1 Major Takeaways from Presentations

- Digital tools empower youth in grassroots democracy, but strong digital rights — encompassing access, expression, and privacy — are essential for their safe and effective use.
- Comparative analysis confirms that the nature of a country's digital space (contested, stable, or hybrid) significantly shapes the extent of citizen empowerment and democratic resilience.
- Youth are already actively using digital platforms for accountability — illustrated by established tools such as BudgIT and Ushahidi.

4.2 Insights from the Discussion

- Misinformation is the number one barrier to effective digital civic engagement — as confirmed by 87% of participants who have used digital tools for civic purposes.
- Innovative low-tech and low-data solutions can significantly promote inclusion and bridge the digital divide.
- The five breakout groups generated creative, context-specific ideas including anonymous reporting tools, multi-language radio integration, and simplified government messaging.

4.3 Emerging Trends

Trend	Description
■ Youth-Led Civic Tech	Rapid rise of youth-driven technology solutions for transparency and accountability across the continent.
■ Hybrid Approaches	Increasing adoption of combined online and offline strategies, recognising that the digital divide requires both digital and analogue tools.
■ Fact-Checking Culture	Growing emphasis on verification tools, media literacy, and anonymity features to protect activists and maintain information integrity.
■ ■ Community Ownership	Rising demand for locally led, community-owned digital interventions with clearly defined roles for national NGOs.

5. CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- **Security risks:** Digital surveillance, internet shutdowns, and online harassment remain direct threats to youth activists.
- **Digital divide:** Persistent inequalities in connectivity, digital literacy, tool access, and high costs of data and SMS.
- **Rural exclusion:** Lack of internet access, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas (e.g. South Sudan).
- **Government oversight:** Potential control of digital spaces by authorities creates a chilling effect on civic expression.
- **Data security:** Need for robust security frameworks to prevent data manipulation and protect activist identities.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

01

Strengthen Security & Anonymity

Pre-audit all digital tools for security and anonymity features before deployment. Ensure activists are protected from surveillance and data exploitation.

02

Prioritise Accessible & Inclusive Formats

Multi-language content, radio integration, voice notes, and graphics-first messaging must be standard practice to ensure no community is left behind.

03**Balance Tech Promotion with Safety**

For every tech solution promoted, a corresponding risk mitigation strategy must address surveillance, harassment, and online safety.

04**Ensure Locally Led Interventions**

All digital democracy initiatives should be community-owned, with clearly defined and meaningful roles for national NGOs in design and implementation.

7. CONCLUSION

The Digital Rights & Grassroots Democracy webinar successfully created a dynamic and interactive platform for youth and stakeholders to explore the transformative role of digital tools in strengthening grassroots democracy across Africa.

The session highlighted the immense power of digital spaces alongside real and present risks — including misinformation, government surveillance, and the persistent digital divide. Through insightful presentations and practical breakout exercises, participants generated actionable, youth-driven solutions grounded in four core principles:

Accountability**Transparency****Safety****Inclusion**

The momentum generated through this webinar must be sustained. Youth voices and youth-led solutions are not supplementary — they are central to the future of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Nuru Trust Network**

Illuminating Pathways, Empowering Futures

**YOUTH
DEMOCRACY
COHORT****Youth
Democracy
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Shaping the
Future of
Democracy

