

# CSOs Recommendations on the Human Centred Digitalisation Phase II

## Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AAP	Annual Action Programme
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
GG	Global Gateway
IT	Information Technology
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
META	Meaningful Engagement: Transformative Action
MTP IV	Fourth Medium Term Plan 2023-2027
PASEDE	Public Accountability and Service Delivery
RACHEL	<u>Remote Area Community Hotspot for Education and Learning</u>
SSC	Strategic Steering Committee
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

## Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

## Global Gateway Initiative in Kenya

The Global Gateway (GG) initiative, launched by the European Union (EU) and Member States, represents a strategic commitment to mobilizing up to €300 billion in investments across key sectors such as digital transformation, climate and energy, transport, education, and health. As a cornerstone of the EU's contribution to narrowing the global infrastructure investment gap, the initiative aligns with the UN's Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement. It emphasizes democratic values, good governance, transparency, green and clean approaches, and security while leveraging private sector participation.

In Kenya, the Global Gateway prioritizes human-centered digitalization, allocating €435 million across 32 projects to bridge the digital divide, accelerate digital economic transformation, and promote open and inclusive digital governance. This focus reflects shared priorities between the EU and Kenya as articulated in frameworks such as the National Digital Master Plan, MTP IV, EU Digital Rights Principles, and climate commitments. The initiative also seeks to reduce inequalities, address youth unemployment by fostering digital economy opportunities, and align policies with broader geopolitical and regulatory contexts.

Recognizing the critical role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in shaping the success of these efforts, **the META consortium hosted a structured dialogue for CSOs in Kenya on December 3, 2024** with 62 diverse CSOs.

The main objective of this session was to provide CSOs with a platform to share their inputs, perspectives, and insights on the new Annual Action Programme for Human-Centered Digitalization Phase II. The session facilitated discussions on the framework for the EU-Kenya cooperation on digitalisation, preparation for the new action and the process, key components of the new action and a CSO dialogues on key factors such as inclusivity, localisation, political context in the 2027 general elections among other priority issues.

This report documents the outcomes of the dialogue, highlighting CSOs' recommendations for ensuring inclusivity, transparency, accountability and local relevance in the GG's implementation. It serves as a foundational step toward fostering meaningful engagement and advancing the success of human-centered digitalization initiatives in Kenya.

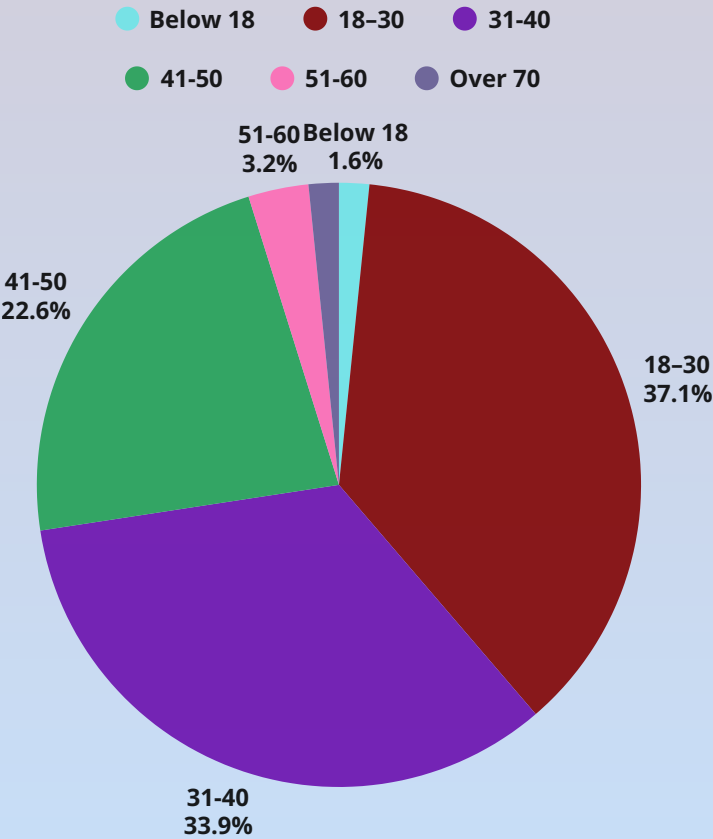
*€435 million across 32 projects*



## Age Disaggregation & Number Reached

Age Disaggregation		Number Reached	
Below 18 years	1	Male	26
18 to 30 years	23	Female	36
31 to 40 years	21	Counties represented	33
41 to 50 years	14		
51 to 60 years	2		
Over 70 years	1		

### Demographic breakdown of participants



## Session 1: Unpacking Global Gateway in Kenya

This session was led by Alexandre Baron and Milou Vanmulken from the European Union Delegation (EUD) in Kenya. They presented the EU's digitalisation efforts in the country, covering both current actions and planned priorities ahead. The aim of the session was to share with the CSOs the framework for the EU-Kenya cooperation on digitalization, the process of preparing the new human centred digitalization phase II and open discussion for CSOs to share their input to shape the new action.

The presentation pointed out that the EU and member states are promoting human-centred digitalization for the benefit of people, economy and society. The digitalization initiatives are geared towards enabling fair and inclusive economies, open, democratic and sustainable societies, trusted and secure solutions. In specific the session explored the three pillars of the of the EU's digitalisation initiative.

- **Pillar I** aims to reduce the digital gap by enhancing digital infrastructure and literacy particularly in underserved areas, through projects like the Global Gateway Flagship: Last Mile Connectivity of primary schools which is connecting 700 schools to the internet and upgrading the infrastructure of 300 schools with sustainable financing model.
- **Pillar II** focuses on transforming the digital economy by supporting initiatives such as Digital4TVET, which prepares the workforce for future jobs in IoT, robotics, and data and AI engineering, and promotes inclusive access to digital tools and education.
- **Pillar III** investments are geared towards open and inclusive digital governance, enhancing e-government systems, data protection, and cybersecurity to ensure a secure and democratic digital environment. These pillars collectively aim to create fair, inclusive economies and societies, leveraging digitalisation for socio-economic benefits and improved governance.

The EU team also took time to unpack the preparation of the new Annual Action Plan 2025 on the Human Centred Digitalisation Phase II. It was made clear that the process begun with an identification of a Strategic Steering Committee (SSC) who have worked on a concept note. The formulation of the action document is done through broad-based consultations with stakeholders, studies and implementing partners. A validation and approval of the action document is conducted by the European Commission and the EU member states. Contracts are then developed outlining the contractual terms, outputs and activities.

The last part of the presentation outlined the second phase of the Human-Centred Digitalisation initiative under the Annual Action Programme (AAP) 2025. The rationale behind this action is multifaceted. It aligns with the strategic priorities of both the European Union and Kenya, including the Global Gateway, the Fourth Medium Term Plan 2023-2027 (MTP IV), National Digital Master Plan, and EU Digital Rights Principles.

The initiative is keen to reduce inequalities exacerbated by the digital divide, which risks leaving many people behind and creating new vulnerabilities. Additionally, the initiative aims to address youth unemployment by leveraging the digital economy's potential to create employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation opportunities. Geopolitical considerations also play a role, with a focus on aligning policies and regulations, upholding digital rights, and addressing challenges such as digital surveillance, misinformation, and AI ethics.

The overall objective of the initiative is to contribute to a more inclusive and greener Kenya. This is to be achieved by reducing digital connectivity gaps, growing the digital economy, and strengthening digital governance. Specifically, the initiative aims to expand secure, affordable, and resilient last-mile connectivity in underserved areas, create job and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and youth, and enhance the capacity of businesses to export digital services. Furthermore, it seeks to improve digital policy frameworks, public services, and data governance.

To achieve these objectives, the initiative will undertake various activities. These include extending the optical ground wire network to improve digital infrastructure, training youth and women in business process outsourcing, IT services, software development, and AI through technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and partnerships with the private sector. The initiative will also promote and incubate women- and youth-led social enterprises based on data and AI innovation. Additionally, it will provide financial and institutional support to the Green Digital Innovation Hub, align regulatory environments, and support land registry digitization and corporate governance improvements.

Implementation of the initiative will involve partnerships with various stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector entities, and educational institutions. The budget and governance structures will be designed to ensure efficient and transparent management. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be established to track progress and measure the impact of the initiative, ensuring that the objectives are met, and adjustments are made as necessary.

*Share EU-Kenya digitalization framework*

## Session 2: EU Kenya CSO engagement on the AAP 2025: Human Centred Digitalisation phase II

Session 2 of the EU-Kenya CSO engagement on the AAP 2025: Human-Centred Digitalisation Phase II focused on fostering meaningful dialogue among CSOs in Kenya. The session featured seven breakout room discussions, each moderated by members of the Steering Committee of the [Inclusive Dialogue Mechanism](#). This ensured that the discussions were structured, inclusive, and aligned with the session's objectives.

The breakout sessions were organised by regional blocs, a strategic approach that guaranteed representation from all counties across Kenya. These blocs included Nairobi, Mt. Kenya and Aberdares Region Economic Bloc, Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB), Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC), and Jumuia ya Kaunti za Pwani. This regional approach not only promoted inclusivity but also ensured that diverse perspectives from across the country were captured and integrated into the engagement process.

Through this setup, CSOs had the opportunity to discuss the questions below within their regions, share unique challenges, and propose tailored solutions to advance the human-centred digitalisation agenda in Kenya. The active participation and collaboration in these sessions were critical in shaping the collective vision and priorities for the AAP 2025.

- How can the action effectively ensure that the Global Gateway investment is inclusive and representative of diverse perspectives, including those from civil society, community-based organizations, and marginalized or excluded groups? What strategies can be implemented to continually monitor and improve this inclusivity?
- How can the Global Gateway initiative ensure that its projects are designed and implemented in a way that reflects the priorities, needs, and cultural contexts of local communities?
- How can we establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and make necessary adjustments during implementation.
- Did the EU get the focus right within the three focus areas? Within the three focus areas, what are the main areas of concern for CSOs in Kenya?
- Within the priorities for the AAP 2025 identified, how in your view can the EU best respond to the latest political developments in Kenya, and the upcoming elections, for example in relation to youth empowerment and youth employment?
- Looking at the different output areas proposed, how can the EU improve the design to ensure that the action responds to the priorities, needs, and cultural contexts and will have a tangible impact for Kenyans?
- The EU is currently assessing how to sustainably connect underserved and unserved areas to the internet. i.e. what technologies, financing and governance models to use in order to make sure connectivity is affordable and accessible for households and critical service providers. Based on your engagement with your communities, what factors do we need to consider?



## Session 3: The Consensus: Kenyan CSOs Recommendations to the European Union Delegation to Kenya

### Digital Transformation and Geographical Inclusivity

While the actions's initial focus on Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) provides a strategic starting point, CSOs recommend that the action's vision must extend far beyond these regions to create a truly comprehensive and equitable national digital ecosystem. In addition, before embarking on the new initiatives, the EU should conduct thorough evaluations of current and past projects. A deep dive into the effectiveness of existing interventions, including an assessment of actors, areas of focus, engagement strategies, and outcomes, is necessary. Identifying lessons learned, challenges faced, and areas for improvement will help to refine future actions. This evaluation process will provide invaluable insights into what works, what does not, and where adjustments need to be made to ensure that EU interventions continue to meet their goals efficiently.

### Digital Technology Infrastructure

CSOs emphasized the need for a holistic assessment of digital needs. Beyond mere connectivity, it is important for the digitalization investment to promote robust energy solutions, comprehensive security protocols, and protection mechanisms. Particular attention should look at safeguarding vulnerable populations especially minors, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, women and girls in the digital ecosystem. The action should put in place multi-layered security approaches that protect both physical infrastructure and digital rights.

### Combating Corruption and Enhancing Governance Transparency

Land governance digitalization presents both unprecedented opportunities and significant risks. CSOs recommend integration of robust anti-corruption mechanisms that [prevent the potential misuse of digital platforms at the Ministry of Land, Housing & Urban Development](#) that legitimize illegal land dealings. By implementing transparent, traceable digital processes, we can reduce the risks of illegal land transactions and create more accountable governance systems. In addition, CSOs recommend that action should strengthen digital governance and transparency in government workforce distribution in the national county levels. Digital infrastructure should be leveraged to create real-time, accessible databases that allow citizens to monitor resource allocation, employment practices, and governance inclusivity. This approach will transform the digital landscape in governance from a mere tool into a powerful mechanism for democratic accountability

## Inclusion that Leaves No One Behind

CSOs recommend that the EU should prioritize capacity-building and sensitisation initiatives for marginalized or excluded groups, providing them with relevant information and skills to understand the large-scale infrastructure or digital projects funded through the Global Gateway framework and its benefits. By doing so, this will enable organisations to better engage with projects, monitor activities and ensure effective participation. Persons with disabilities for example can be included through the advancement of phone technology specifically customised for the visually impaired and hearing impaired. Effective strategies that can be utilised to continually monitor and improve inclusivity include regularly organising stakeholder feedback meetings to assess progress, inclusivity and engagement; developing a standardised inclusive reporting format to track representation; and continuous capacity-building.

Digital solutions must be designed to accommodate diverse users, focusing on quality, accessibility, and affordability, while integrating the interests of young women, women and girls with disabilities, elderly women, and marginalised communities into digital programs to ensure equal benefits and participation in economic, social, and political life. Recognizing access to digital information and the Internet as a basic human right under the United Nations framework, full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is essential. The CRPD designates ICTs as fundamental to accessibility rights, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the global commitment to "leave no one behind." Achieving this requires ensuring that quality the digital actions are available, accessible, and affordable to disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, rural populations, women and girls, youth, and older persons.

## Protect Internet Freedoms

Ensure robust democratic engagement during the 2027 general elections. To promote effective and equitable internet governance, it is essential to review and refine existing laws to ensure they are not restrictive and draconian, aligning them with democratic principles and human rights. CSOs called for efforts to strengthen their capacities to curtail government-imposed internet shutdowns and restrictions. Additionally, the action should prioritize supporting CSOs to implement robust layers of security in their use of technology to prevent digital manipulation of data or facts, thereby safeguarding the integrity of information and enhancing digital resilience and advocating for human rights-based approaches and utilizing lawful systems to maintain connectivity. On youth empowerment, it is essential to engage the youth through civic education particularly on public participation and empower them through digital skills.

## Design Area-Specific Interventions

One-size-fits-all solutions are unlikely to work effectively in diverse regions in Kenya. The EU should design area-specific interventions, recognizing that local contexts such as infrastructure, economic activities, and cultural norms vary significantly. For example, areas with limited or no electricity connectivity will require alternative approaches, such as solar-powered solutions or mobile-based technology. Tailoring interventions to specific local priorities, needs and challenges will ensure that actions are not only relevant but also feasible and impactful in the long run.

### Ensure the Actions Responds to Priorities, Needs and Cultural Contexts

To improve the design and ensure the EU digitalisation actions respond to priorities, needs, and cultural contexts, it is crucial to position CSOs and citizens in all their diversities at the centre of accountability, transparency, and oversight for the EU actions. CSOs capacities in advocacy using digital platforms should be enhanced, enabling them to cascade these skills to communities, ensuring citizen involvement in oversight and accountability processes. By leveraging technology, CSOs can employ tools like online petitions and digital campaigns to amplify advocacy and raise awareness at the grassroots level. Real-time monitoring and evaluation of the actions should be prioritized to promote transparency, using tools such as [Geographic Information System \(GIS\)](#) mapping, visual impact assessments, and collaborative platforms. Establishing community digital hubs can further empower communities to monitor project implementation effectively. Additionally, strengthening the capacities of CSOs and providing funding to extend their reach to the remotest areas is vital. This includes utilizing local structures, such as community radios, community-based organisations and community members to ensure that actions are inclusive and culturally responsive. The EU should prioritize partnerships with community-based organizations to build the capacity of youth and women, who are often the most vulnerable but also the most dynamic members of society. Empowering these groups with the skills needed for sustainable livelihoods, innovation, and leadership will create lasting impact and contribute to community development.

### Establish Robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Mechanisms

CSOs recommend the establishment of a MEL framework to ensure effective implementation of the actions and provision of a feedback mechanism. This includes developing a comprehensive MEL plan with clear indicators, milestones, and timelines to track progress systematically. The baseline survey should be conducted to establish initial conditions and set measurable targets. The EU should organize regular learning and review sessions, fostering a culture of continuous learning to assess successes, challenges, and areas for improvement, while utilizing digital data management tools for real-time data capture, storage, and analysis. Additionally, robust documentation of activities should be prioritized to capture lessons learned and inform future improvements.

CSOs also emphasize the importance of actively involving community members in the MEL processes to enhance accountability, gather meaningful feedback, and ensure that learning is incorporated into ongoing and future interventions. The EU should design adaptive and flexible frameworks that allow for adjustments in response to emerging needs, lessons learnt, and gaps identified during monitoring, evaluation and learning. Re-evaluation and follow-up of existing projects by the EU for example through a database to see their impact and effectiveness can also be useful as the EU starts the new digitalisation project.

## Sustainability and Local Ownership

To ensure sustainability and localized impact, county governments should be actively engaged in the implementation of the actions, aligning efforts with regional priorities and contexts. It is essential to conduct comprehensive community needs assessments to identify unique challenges and opportunities within specific local contexts. Building meaningful partnerships with grassroots organizations can help leverage the actions deep understanding of cultural nuances and facilitate smooth coordination. The actions' funding models should prioritize local organizations and communities, enabling direct allocation and utilization of resources to address their specific needs fostering ownership and long-term sustainability.

## Align the Actions with National and County Development Plans

It is essential that EU initiatives align the actions closely with the national and county development plans in Kenya. This alignment will not only foster a sense of local responsibility but also enhance the relevance and impact of the interventions. By tailoring actions to the specific priorities of national and county frameworks, the EU can ensure that projects are not only strategically placed but also have a greater chance of being supported by local stakeholders and institutions.

## Sustainability of underserved and unserved areas

Before addressing internet accessibility in some underserved and unserved areas, priority should be given to accessibility to electricity. In areas where there is no electricity, devices such as the [Remote Area Community Hotspot for Education and Learning \(RACHEL\)](#), which is powered by Solar and has proven effective for children in the rural areas, could be considered. Factors that should also be taken into account by the EU in underserved and unserved areas to ensure accessible, affordable and reliable internet connectivity include engaging service providers such as Safaricom; subsidising the cost of internet and installation of satellite connectivity i.e. Starlink. Additionally, regarding internet accessibility to schools, working with the government would be useful to bridge the gap since most schools in the community setting are run by the government. Once the above issues are addressed, then soft skills and trainings on use of internet and more targeted actions can follow. On long-term sustainability, community-owned and managed digital hubs could be utilised, while addressing both financial and security concerns.

## Conclusion

The structured engagement between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the European Union (EU) Delegation has provided an essential platform to align priorities and shape the Annual Action Programme (AAP) 2025 for Human-Centred Digitalisation Phase II. This dialogue underscored the significance of inclusivity, local ownership, and tailored interventions in addressing Kenya's digital transformation challenges and opportunities. The active participation of regional blocs ensured representation from across the country, fostering a diverse array of perspectives and recommendations.

Key outcomes of the dialogue include a robust focus on geographical inclusivity, sustainability, capacity building, and alignment with Kenya's national and county development plans. The discussions emphasized the importance of addressing foundational issues such as electricity access and governance challenges while leveraging innovative digital solutions to promote equity and inclusivity. The need for strong monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks was highlighted to ensure continuous improvement and accountability in the implementation of the initiative.

Looking ahead, the EU's commitment to considering CSOs' recommendations and following through with actionable steps will demonstrate the potential for impactful collaboration, meaningful CSO engagement and transformative action. As the META consortium and the Steering Committee continue their engagement with the European Union Delegation to Kenya, the shared vision of a digitally inclusive and transformative Kenya remains central.

This report serves as the first CSO recommendations, capturing the collective voice of Kenyan CSOs and paving the way for transformative digitalisation actions that leaves no one behind.

*Inclusivity, sustainability, and local ownership*

## Annexes

- i. [CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA](#)
- ii. PARTICIPANTS LIST
- iii. SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT
- iv. GALLERY OF PHOTOS