

LET

THEM

LOG

ON

2026  
Elections ·  
Voices from  
the Digital  
Public Square

The  
Companion  
ZINE

E-DEMOCRACY  
IN UGANDA



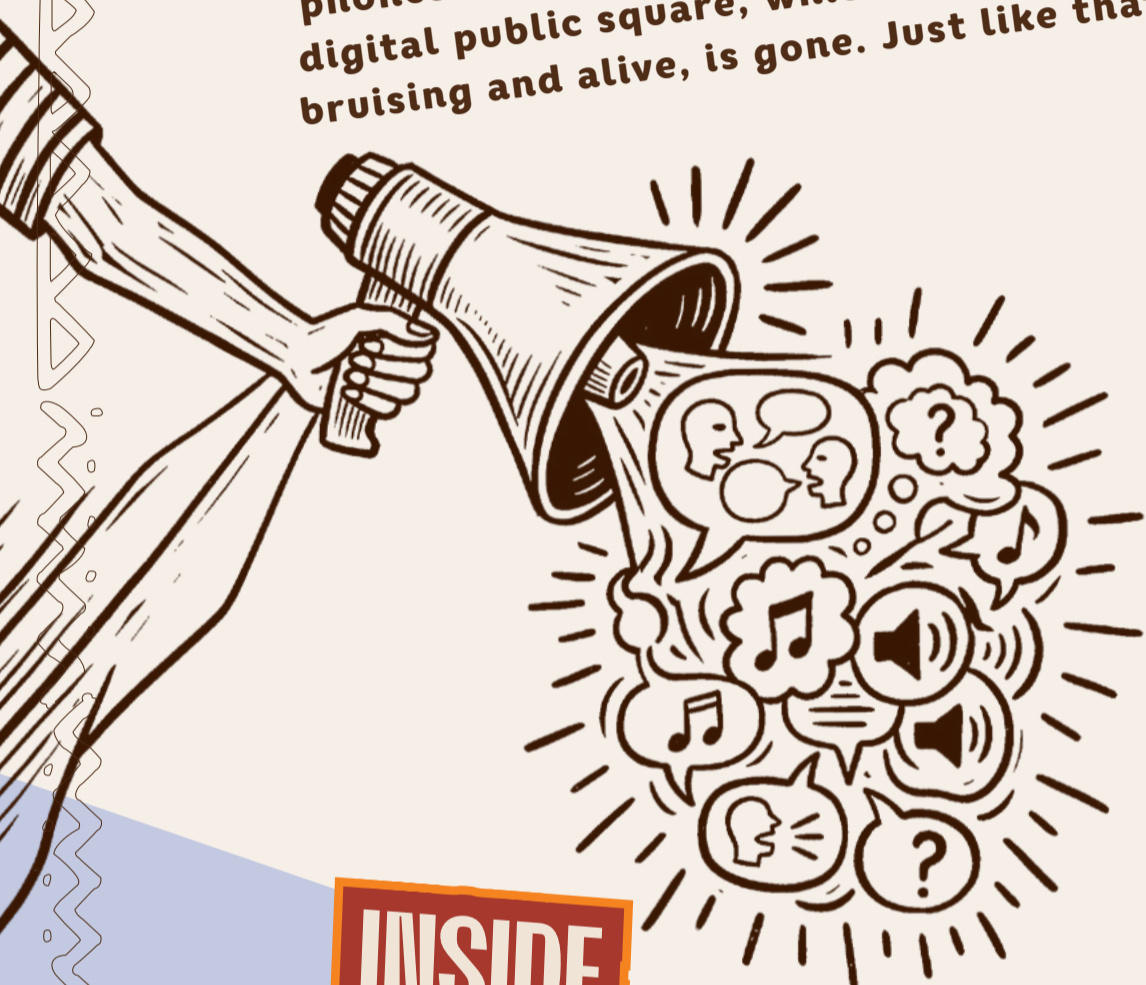
HOUSE  
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CIPESA

# FOREINWORD

Election week, 2026. The internet goes off. Not flickers: off. And what you notice, in the silence that follows, is not chaos. It is the stillness of people going back to finding out what is happening the way their parents did: by asking someone nearby. The phones are in pockets. The feeds are frozen. The digital public square, which had been loud and bruising and alive, is gone. Just like that.



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That moment sits at the centre of what this zine is asking. Because the question this research keeps returning to is not simply whether Ugandans are online. They are, in growing millions. But what are they doing there, what is being done to them there, and who decides when the lights go out. These are not abstract questions. They are the questions of our political lives.

This zine is a companion to House of Seshat's e-Democracy research report. But where the report documents and analyses, this publication witnesses. The contributors gathered here, poets, journalists, activists, researchers, digital citizens, are not summarising findings. They are living inside them.

*House of Seshat, Kampala, 2026*

**TIKTOK BY JANICE NKAJJA**



<https://bit.ly/4w1g7AK>

<https://bit.ly/4eyrqKg>

## SECTION I

SO. HERE IS WHAT WE FOUND

# LOGGED ON, LOCKED OUT



House of Seshat's *Democracy in the Feeds: TikTok, X and the Making of Uganda's Digital Public Sphere*, produced with support from CIPESA, maps public participation and political discourse across Uganda's social media platforms during the 2026 electoral cycle, drawing on close to a million posts analysed through data science and digital ethnography. The picture that emerges is at once creative and constrained: on

TikTok, which accounts for roughly 50% of Uganda's internet traffic, users consumed political content at scale but rarely commented, shared, or produced their own; on X, retweets dominated over original posts, and a rotating cast of citizen media, journalists, and paid influencers shaped what conversations looked like. Engagement was episodic throughout, spiking around events then falling sharply, and when the government shut down the internet for five days during election week, political discourse briefly surged on restoration before collapsing back to pre-shutdown levels within days. This is the rhythm of a stunted digital public sphere. And yet within that constraint, something else was visible: a shadow lexicon of memes, coded language, and satire through which Ugandans named power, mocked it, and warned each other about it, even when saying things plainly was not safe.

THIS IS THE RHYTHM OF A STUNTED DIGITAL PUBLIC SPHERE.

## The Receipts

➤	24.6%	Social media users as share of Uganda's total population (UCC, 2025)
➤	70%+	Internet users aged 15–35 as share of all internet users
➤	50%	TikTok's share of Uganda's total internet traffic — 9.3 million subscribers
➤	UGX 268BN	Cost of biometric voter verification kits that failed for the 3rd consecutive election
➤	"NOT FREE"	Uganda's Freedom House internet freedom rating (2025)
➤	5 YEARS	Maximum prison sentence under the Computer Misuse Act for 'misuse of social media'

# BETWEEN ASPIRATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS— RECENTERING THE **E-DEMOCRACY VISION** FOR UGANDA.

*A submission by the House.*

**IGNORING OR SIDELINING THIS REALITY ONLY MAGNIFIES THE DISSONANCE BETWEEN THE DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS OF OUR GOVERNMENTS AND THE REALITIES OF THEIR CITIZENS.**

For over a decade, Ugandans have been more actively living on and enjoying the internet, specifically social media platforms. This is a broad statement, of course, given that Ugandans are part of a global population that has also experienced complete internet shutdowns, locking them out of these online spaces. So, while more Ugandans keep joining the connected minority of only 24.6% of the population online today, a strange dance persists where steps taken forward are continually met with several steps back.

The question lingers: regarding Ugandans exercising their democratic power online, which currently exists somewhere between aspiration and restriction, is e-democracy even desirable for our society, or is it beyond possibility? If, at the peak of the electoral season, thousands of Ugandans can wake up disabled to speak on the election, if the idea of dialogue imagined between the state and citizens is barely observed even today, if citizens are more inclined to use memes and humor to discuss politics than explicit discourse, can we even begin to imagine a functional e-democracy in our country?

Herein we believe is the work. To imagine otherwise. To recall why e-democracy is in today's world, a critical element of any functional democracy. Citizen voice, especially among Africa's majority youthful population, looks to online platforms to express views and call for better governance across different aspects. Ignoring or sidelining this reality only magnifies the dissonance between the democratic aspirations of our governments and the realities of their citizens. Moreover, there is even greater work to be done between governments and citizens to advocate for platform governance that supports their diverse societal ideals.



**WATCH JANICE'S SHORT VIDEO BREAKING DOWN THE DEMOCRACY IN THE FEEDS: TIKTOK, X AND THE MAKING OF UGANDA'S DIGITAL PUBLIC SPHERE REPORT.**



<https://bit.ly/48TVFro>



<https://bit.ly/4tgZrTj>

## SECTION II

# THE ATTENTION ECONOMY

**LOK MA MAKO LWAK KI KIT MA DANO MA I UGANDA GU TIYO KWEDE KI JAMI ME NYWAKO LOK I KARE ME BOLO KWIR MA OTUM NI ONYO I DWE MANOK MUKATO. WA KETO TAM MATUT IKOM TIKTOK, X KI KIT MA LOC LOBO KI TIIMO KWEDE.**

The following contribution was submitted in Luo. Its inclusion in the original language is intentional.

Tic pa lwak i Uganda, i dwe manok mukato anged ki tutwale i kare me bolo kwir me mwaka 2026, tye ka mede ki aa ki i kabedo ma nen me cito i kabedo me cim. Kabedo me nywako lok calo TikTok ki X (ma onongo ki lwongo ni Twitter) pe gu medo rwom me nywako i lok me wibye keken ento bene gu loko kit ma yub me wibye ki yubu kwede, ki tiimo kwede, ki kit ma ki pyem kwede.

TikTok, tutwale, oloko lok me wibye odoko kit me tuku. Ludiro ki luyub jami me Uganda gu yubu lwak dano mapol ma twero loko tam pa lwak. Lok me wibye i TikTok pol kare nen, mako cwiny, ki poko ne, ma rwate ki kit ma yub ni miiyo kwede jami ma kelo miti. Yub me bolo kwir tye ka medde ki jenge i kom dano ma gi loko tam gi me keto tam me wibye i vidio ma cok, ma twero rwate, ma weko apoka poka ma tye i kin jami me galo wang ki kwena me wibye.

I kom X, ma pat, lok me wibye bedo oyotoyot ki lok. En tiyo calo kabedo me lok i kare kikome, lok pa dano ma rwom gi lamal, ki poko nged oyotoyot. I kare me bolo kwir, dano ma pe cwako gamente calo Bobi Wine gutiyo ki kabedo ni me lok ki lucwak gii, tutwale ka yub ma pe ki keto i cim onwongo ki gengo onyo rac. I kare me peko, ma calo lok me aunauna i nge bolo kwir ki jemo, X odoko yoo ma pire tek me coyo jami ma otimme ki yubu lagam, kadi bed ni ki gengo dano me donyo iye kare ki kare.

Ki adaa, tam pa gamente me juku tic ki intanet ki gengo dano me donyo i kabedo me intanet i kare me bolo kwir nyutu kit ma kabedo me intanet ni odoko gin ma pire tek. Lutela gu

waco ni jami eni mitte me juku lok ma pi adaa, ento jo ma kwero lok ni gi waco ni gi balo lok ma ki ngeyo ki nywako tam i kin dano. Tic me cego intanet ni, ma pi rwate, nyutu rwom me wibye ma mako tic ki dano i intanet.

Gin ma aa ki i kare ni tye cal ma nen maber pa 'lok me wibye' kit me wibye ma ki yubu ki tam pa yub me wilobo. I kom TikTok, nen tye ma lubu kit ma dano winyo kwede ki kit ma gi winyo kwede; i kom X, teko tye ma mako rwom me ngwec, rwate, ki lok.

Me agiki ne, tic pa lwak i Uganda i kare ni tye ma rwate ki yub eni. Kabedo me nywako lok i intanet oweko dano gubedo ki twero me donyo iye, ento bene okelo peko manyen, medo ki lok goba, apokapoka i kin dano, ki diyo dano. Lok me wibye dong pe ki tiimo keken; ki yubu ne ki i vidio, lok ma ki coyo i cim, ki jami ma otimme ma loko kit ma dano gi niang kwede teko, jemo, ki tic gi i yub me loc ma wooro tam pa lwak ma munu lwongo democracy.



Andrew Onen is a multi-talented Ugandan creative: a comedian, engineer, MC, voice-over artist, journalist, and entrepreneur in printing, branding, and photography.

## SECTION III

# THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN

# ONLINE CHAOS



# OFFLINE NONCHALANCE

It's been a few months since the Ugandan election cycle wrapped up and one might assume that the dust has finally settled. Well, in this part of the world, the dust on political banter never settles.

In the period leading up to the elections, Social Media was awash with chatter around politics, governance, and democracy. During that time, the Uganda interwebs were filled with committed, dedicated, and noisy online patriots. It could easily be said that civic engagement was at an all-time high.



## Enter the reality.

Despite the endless online noise making, it emerged that few activists ever got out of their seats to get anything done, beyond yelling online. Just a countable number of activists were able to step out, feel the heat of the sun, struggle with the dust, battle with the cops, take in some tear gas, and basically risk their lives on the streets.

In fact, the disconnect was so visible that oftentimes, a story would break, Ugandans would eat it up, chew on it, and then spit it out after a few hours - only to pick up a more exciting gossip or entertainment trending story.

There is a laziness that usually takes over Ugandans online because right after sharing their very bold and tough opinions about governance and social justice, they usually slide right back into endless scrolling on their phones enjoying TikTok challenges, worthless YouTube rabbit holes, chaotic Twitter fights, and arguments about Arsenal's title challenge.

## Basically, laziness takes over, and everyone embraces *slacktivism*.

*Slacktivism* is that outwardly cool but inwardly empty friend who says smart things but doesn't do smart things. During the election season, people shared memes, expressed dissatisfaction and contributed to discourse around democracy - each of them feeling a sense of completion for contributing to a better country. Unfortunately, a good number of the online warriors even failed to make it to the polls. Some cited work schedules, others said their polling stations were far - never mind the fact that it was a public holiday, some simply said there was no point voting because the outcome was somewhat known.

In Uganda, activism - whether online or offline - attracts risky results. Since going offline to pursue good governance is risky, many turn to social media which gives some form of closure that they are expressing themselves. It is cheaper, less risky and more anonymous to use the internet. But beyond the noise making, there is need to rise up, and get things done offline. The seeds that are planted online need to be watered by a tangible offline effort for there to be any sort of results in the hunt for good governance, democracy, social justice and a better Uganda for all.

**Bernard Ewalu Olupot**  
Social Justice Advocate, Digital Practitioner, Blogger,  
Radio Presenter, D'Mighty Breakfast, 933 KFM

## SECTION IV

# AFTER THE HASHTAG

## Ddala Okakasa Okyetaaga?

Submitted in Luganda. The poem's inclusion in the original language is intentional.

Tulina ebigambo bingi  
Naye maama ebikolwa!  
Ku mikutu eyo tuwaga  
Twecanga nga mpanga  
Mu butambi bwe tukola  
N'okuvuma ne tuvuma  
Tweyita njuki nkambwe  
N'okuluma nti tuluma  
Kyokka emiggo olukubwa  
N'amasasi ne gavuga  
Tudduka nkuba-ejja  
Tweyune enju mwe tusula.

Twalemwa okukkaanya  
Ku lw'obulumu bwe tusuza  
Tusuubira alitutaasa  
Aliva waggulu n'agwa?  
Twogedde nnyo bigaanye  
Ebigambo tebiyambye.

Tulina obulumu obungi  
Naye bugira bulinda  
Kuba tunoonya ssente  
Anti obwavu butugoba.

Tulowooza kye tunaalya  
N'emisolo gye tunaawa  
Tewali ssaawa kufissa  
Nti kati ssaawa kukaaba.

N'amaziga tegatunda  
Nti tugawe abatubanja  
N'amaziga tegatunda  
Anti buli lwe tukaaba  
Gavumenti ng'egamba  
Nti ffe tukaabya kajanja  
Nti era tusaana kutwala  
Mu makomera gatuyunge  
Nti era tusaana kusabula  
Miggo tuwone ekyeejo.  
Tulina obusungu bungi,  
Naye maama ebikolwa!  
Twogeza maanyi na busagwa  
Naye bikoma ku bigambo  
Ne bikala ng'essanja.  
Kiki ddala kye tupanga  
Ekitasaako bibala?  
Myaka na myaka tulinda

Tulinda mbeera kukyuuka.  
Bangi bafudde tulinda  
Z'embuyaga ezikunta.  
Myaka na myaka tulinda  
Ng'ensi eggwawo batunda  
Myaka na myaka tulinda  
Tetusobola kwekunga!  
Tetusobola kwekunga!  
Tetusobola kwekunga!  
Twalemwa okukwatagana.

Ddala okakasa okyetaaga?  
Ndaba kibulamu omuliro  
Ogwaka obudde okuziba.  
Ddala okakasa okyetaaga?  
Ndaba kibulamu obuvumu  
Obw'omuzira atekanga.  
Ddala okakasa okyetaaga?  
Keeranga nno okibanje  
Obajjukize abaagaana.  
Ky'oyagala kikuseeza.  
Ddala okakasa okyetaaga?



AUDIO PIECE BY  
SSEBO LULE



<https://bit.ly/4sSLGtH>



Ssebo Lule is a Luganda poet, performer, and multidisciplinary artist. His works mostly address the social and political problems faced by the people of his motherland, Uganda. He's the author of Ebitontome Ebitasesa, Ensi Tekoma, among others.

**BANDEEBE!****Oruhuzyo n'Amaguzi!**

Bandeebe nikiruga omu kigambo okureeba. Okureeba, ni emwe aha mmanyisa itaano z'obuhangwa bw'omuntu, ezi omuntu akozesa kumanya amagara gye hamwe n'ebimwetooroire. Emoija ina ni Okuhurira, Okukaga, Okurigatsa, n'Okukwata. Emanyisa zontaano zikora kumwe, kurinda amagara g'omuntu - nigwo mugasho gwazo mukuru.

Emanyisa ezi zituhwera kumanya ebirikutubaho hamwe n'ebitwetooroire, tutyo tukabaasa kucwamu entwaza erikurinda gye amagara. Abantu abandi abataine mmanyisa y'Okureeba bakozesa emanyisa ezindi ezi baine, kureeba ebibeetooroire nabo.

Bandeebe ni engamba y'Abanya Kaaro Karungi kuruga nsi na nsi, erikworeka omuntu weena orikwitanira okweyoreka, okureebwa muranga: 'Bandeebe obwengye, bandeebe oburungi, bandeebe obugwagye, bandeebe obushoborozi, bandeebe amaani, bandeebe enaku, n'ebindi nk'ebyo, batyo bansiime, bansaasire, bankunde, reero bantende nanye mbe ow'amaani n'okukira abandi boona'. Ni enteekateeka y'okwemanya, n'obumwe, y'okwetiina.

Buri muntu weena nayetaaga okureebwa ondaijo, omu muringo gw'okwetenga kureebwa nk'ow'omugasho omu bandi; beitu kukirikurengyesereza, guhindukamu omuze mubi gw'okuhayahayanira n'okwitanira busha.

Obwahati, hariho empurizana ya intaneeti erikuhikaanisa amahanga, okukira munonga turikuhurizanira n'okuteeranira ahari za buteeraniro [ezimanywa nka social media]; nka Facebook, WhatsApp, X, Instagram n'ebindi eziri omu katere. Abanya Uganda abarikuhika obukaikuru 17 n'okushoba nibo barikukozesa intaneeti, kandi omuri abo, obukaikuru 11 nibo bari ahari buteeraniro.

Buteeraniro nizihwera abantu b'ensi yoona kubugabugana batareebaine butunu. Abantu ku barikuza ahari buteeraniro ezi, bagira oburyo bw'okumanyagana, okureebana, n'okuhikaanisa ebiteekateeko barikwejunisa ebihandiiko, ebishushani hamwe n'amaraka, nk'oku bakureebaine butunu.

Buteeraniro ezi zireeteire entwaza ya bandeebe kukura omu bantu omunsi yoona. Omu Uganda, bandeebe ekwatsire akati, okukira munonga omu minyeeto, n'abakazi. Eky'obusaasi, bandeebe nehuzya ebiteekateeko byoona biza aha kwetenga kuza omu bandi omu mwanya gw'okuhaajaana aha birikuhwera ensi yoona.

Omuri Biruuru, 2026, Uganda ekagiraho akaruuru k'okutoorana abeebembezi b'eihanga, nk'oku bitwaira buri myaaka etaano kwiha 1996. Ahabw'empurizana ya intaneeti abantu baingi okwetooroora ensi yoona nibarahukirwa kumanya amakuru. N'ahabw'ekyo, Abanya Uganda baingi eriigyenda nibamanya ebikuru ebirikufa omu ihanga; nk'obunaku bw'akaruuru, n'abeemereire.

Nambwenu ekigyero ekihango ky'abaabaire beemereire omu karuuru ka Uganda 2026, bakeejunisa buteeraniro nka TikTok, X na WhatsApp, okuhitsya obutumwa bwabo omu bantu. Omu bunaku bw'okushaba akaruuru, oihireho okukashaba butunu omu nteerane eziragiirwe, baingi omuri bo bakakozesa buteeraniro ezi haihi buriizooba, barikwitanira kuhika abantu baingi omukaire kakye okukira oruteerane aha butaka. Baagaruka bakwata obutambi bw'ebishushani n'amaraka omu nteerane, baabihanika ahari buteeraniro, kwongyera amaani omu bahagizi n'omu kujanjaaza obutumwa bwabo omu bantu abarikukozesa intaneeti.

Abamwe omu beebembezi abarikumanywa munonga omu Uganda n'aheru yaayo, bakaakiira abantu baingi ahari za buteeraniro zaabo, baagaaniira aha by'obutegyeki, babashaba akaruuru, buri omwe oyemereire arikuraganisa obuhereza obw'omutindo ogurikukirayo. Bumwe na bumwe beegyesa aha bujunaanizibwa bwa buri munya Uganda, okujumbira eby'obutegyeki n'obwebembezi omu ihanga ryaabo, barikukuratira obuhabuzi bw'ekitebe ky'akaruuru omu Uganda.

Buriijo omu bigaaniro nk'ebi nihaijamu abarikuhagira hamwe n'abarikuhakanisa ogwo oyemereire. Eki kikaabaire nikihamy omucwe gw'okutensa aha biteekateeko n'obuteeka, kwonka omu karuuru aka akahwaire tureebire kaingi, ebigaaniro ebi birikwoga aha kutensa, harugamu okuhakanisiriza, ebiniga, okujumiirana, rwango n'okuhiiganisibwa, n'obumwe okurwana n'embaare omu byanga. Hakabaho n'okufa kw'abantu bamwe abaitsirwe bagyenzi baabo ahabw'eihari ry'okuhagira abemereire omu karuuru. Abandi abaabaire beemereire hamwe n'abahagizi baabo bakaba nibatambuza obutumwa bugwire n'ekigyendererwa ky'okushiisha ababeemereireho hamwe n'abahagizi baabo.

Gavumenti ekacwamu kusinga buteeraniro ya Facebook omu Uganda kwiha obw'akaruuru ka 2021 n'okuhitsya eriizooba, n'ekigyendererwa ky'okutanga abazigu b'eihanga abarikugikozesa kuhaga abantu ngu batabure obusingye oburiho, barikujanjaazya ebishuba. Nikyo kimwe ekyareeteire gavumenti ya Uganda kushariraho kimwe intaneeti omu ihanga ryoona, ebiro 13-17 Biruuru, 2026, omu biro by'akaruuru.

N'obu abamwe baraabe nibaija kuhaajaana omu mazima, baingi nibeejwanzya omu bigaaniro nk'ebi kuronda akatuuti ka bandeebe: nibaranga amaguzi ahagati y'ebitenso by'oburuuru, abandi banagaho ebigambo by'akarebure, baguubwe baareebwa haza batungyemu n'abakuratsi ahari buteeraniro zaabo. Ogu muze mubi gw'okujumiirana hamwe n'okureeta ebitaine kakwate omu kigaaniro ekiruhogye gukeyongyera kukura, kyareetera abantu kutamwa ebigaaniro nk'ebyo ahabw'okushiisha obwire bwabo batatensize gye - baingi barikurahira obutagarukira kutayo ebiteekateeko byaabo omu kigaaniro ky'eby'obutegyeki kyoona omu Uganda.

River Dan Rugaju is a Ugandan actor, voice artist, writer, and French language teacher, known for African Folktales, Reimagined (2023) and Rolex (2020).

# UCHAGUZI WA MINAKA 2025 NCHINI

## TANZANIA NA KUZIMWA KINA MTANDAO

The following contribution was submitted in Kiswahili. Its inclusion in the original language is intentional.

Tanzania ilishuhudia uchaguzi mkuu mwezi wa kumi mwaka 2025. Huu ulikuwa uchaguzi wa saba tangu kurejeshwa kwa mfumo wa vyama vingi mwaka 1995. Pia, Tanzania imeshuhudia kwa mara ya kwanza, kuwa na mwanamke kugombea nafasi ya raisi, tangu nchi ipate uhuru mnamo mwaka 1961. Uchaguzi huu ulifanyika kwa lengo la kuwachagua viongozi watakaochukua nafasi ya raisi, makamu raisi na wabunge.

Lengo la andiko hili ni kuelezea athari za kuzimwa kwa mtandao nchini Tanzania kipindi cha uchaguzi mkuu. Ni muhimu kufahamu kuwa kuna baadhi ya mitandao ya kijamii ambayo ilidhibitiwa Tanzania hata kabla ya uchaguzi mkuu. Clubhouse, ambayo inatumika sana na watanzania waishio Tanzania na waishio nje, ilidhibitiwa tangia mwaka 2023. Hadi leo, Clubhouse haipatikani bila kutumia VPN. X (zamani Twitter) ilidhibitiwa tangia Mei mwaka 2025. Serikali ya Tanzania ilieleza kuwa imeidhibiti X kwasababu inaruhusu maudhui na taarifa za kingono, kitu ambacho kinaharibu nidhamu na tabia za watanzania.

Uchaguzi mkuu ulifanyika tarehe 29 Oktoba 2025, na baadhi ya wananchi walianza kutoa taarifa ya kukosa mtandao. Kwa maeneo mengine, mtandao ulikatika kabisa siku ya uchaguzi. Mtandao nchi nzima ulikatika, na watu wote walikosa mtandao

kwa mnamo siku tano mfululizo, ikiwemo watumiaji wa VPN, watumiaji wa fiber, na wengine wote ambao hutegemea njia mbadala wa kupata mtandao. Serikali ya Tanzania ilieleza kuwa ililazimika kukata mtandao kwa nia ya kulinda amani na kuzuia usambazaji wa taarifa ambazo zinaleta vurugu na maelezo potofu kipindi cha uchaguzi mkuu.

Athari zilikuwa kubwa: miamala ya kifedha inayotegemea mtandao ilishindikana; huduma za hospitali zinazotumia mtandao zilikosekana; wafanyabiashara walipoteza mapato; mpaka wa Namanga ulioiunganisha Kenya na Tanzania uliathirika pakubwa; na sekta ya utalii ilisimama, safari za ndege zikakwama.

Mtandao unawezesha watu kupata taarifa, kufanya miamala ya kifedha, kuwasiliana, kusoma, kufanya kazi, na kuendesha biashara. Hizi ni haki muhimu kabisa na kisheria. Tanzania ilipitisha Sheria ya Upatikanaji wa Taarifa, 2016 inayoashiria kwamba kila mtu atakuwa na haki ya kupata habari. Hata baada ya mtandao kurejea, X na Clubhouse bado hazipatikani. Tanzania haijatao amri yoyote au kutunga sheria yoyote inayosema kuwa kupata mtandao ni haki ya mtu kisheria, lakini ni muhimu hii haki izingatiwe.

Anonymous (at contributor's request)

## Sauti za Mtandaoni Dhidi ya Kimya Kikubwal

Leo hii Uganda, watu wengi huchangia mijadala ya kisiasa mtandaoni. Kwenye X, TikTok, Facebook, na WhatsApp, watu wanajadili uchaguzi, kuwahoji viongozi wao, kueneza ujumbe, na hata kuonyesha matokeo wanayoyaona moja kwa moja. Vijana hasa wametumia mitandao kadha kutoa maoni yao, kukosoa walio mamlakani, na wamefanya siasa ione kama iko karibu zaidi ya vile ilivyo.

Lakini sio Uganda yote. Kuna mpiga kura ambaye hana simu. Kuna kijiji ambacho mawasiliano kwa simu ni duni. Kuna mama pale sokoni ambaye ana simu ya kawaida ile ya kupiga na kupokea tu. Kuna wengi walio na uwezo wa kuwa mtandaoni ila hawaezi kumudu gharama ya data ya kila siku. Watu wote hawa ni raia. Wana haki ya kushiriki mazungumzo ya taifa lao lakini mjadala unapohamia mtandaoni, ukimya wao una kishindo, maanake ni kama hawapo.



Kutengwa kidijitali mwaka 2026 sio kukosa kuwa mtandaoni tu. Ni kukosa nafasi ya kupata habari mpya, kukosa kuwa mahali ambapo elimu ya uraia inasambazwa, kukosa kushuhudia matukio yanavyoendelea, na kukosa jukwaa ambalo sauti za wananchi zinapata kusikika. Ukikosa fursa hio, habari unayoipata imechelewa au imeelezwa na watu wengine kulingana na nia yao.

Hata wale walio mtandaoni wameweza kuona jinsi sauti pale ilivyo dhaifu.

Tukiuliza, "Nani anapata sauti?" itabidi pia tuulize, "Ni nani anaachwa nje?" Wote hawa wakihusishwa katika mjadala mtandaoni

mazungumzo yanaweza kuwa mapana na yenye mizizi zaidi. Wakulima, wamama, vijana, wazee vijijini na wengineo wana maarifa kuhusu maisha ya kila siku. Mara nyingi muonekano huu wao haufiki pale mtandaoni. Wanajua bei za bidhaa, hali ya huduma ya afya, elimu, usalama, na changamoto nyenginezo ambazo ni za msingi. Wakipewa nafasi, mjadala mtandaoni utageuka na kuwa kioo cha jamii mashinani na hatimaye taifa lote. Hapo ndipo sauti ya wanachi wengi itaweza kuonekana na kusikika kihalisi.

Marci Onsingo is an ethnomusicologist, and digital archivist from the Swahili Coast of Kenya tracing culture, sound, and memory as a multidisciplinary artist.



Story and illustrations by Bernice M., a 15-year-old artist reflecting on digital life and Uganda's 2026 elections.

# CONCLUSION

What strikes you, reading these contributions together, is how clearly people already understand what is happening to their digital lives. They do not need to be told that the algorithm is political, that the troll army is coordinated, that the internet shutdown was not a glitch. They felt it. What they are working out, and what this zine tries to hold space for, is what to do with that understanding.

The report ends with a vision of what Uganda's digital democracy could look like if the tools that exist were protected instead of suppressed, if the platforms were accountable, if the citizens were supported rather than surveilled. This zine is a small bet on that possibility. Not because the obstacles are not real. But because the voices here are real too, and they have not stopped.

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thenote@houseofseshat.com

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HOUSE of SESHAT  
E: thenote@houseofseshat.com  
https://houseofseshat.com



Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)  
E: programmes@cipesa.org  
www.cipesa.org