INTERNET SANS FRONTIÈRES

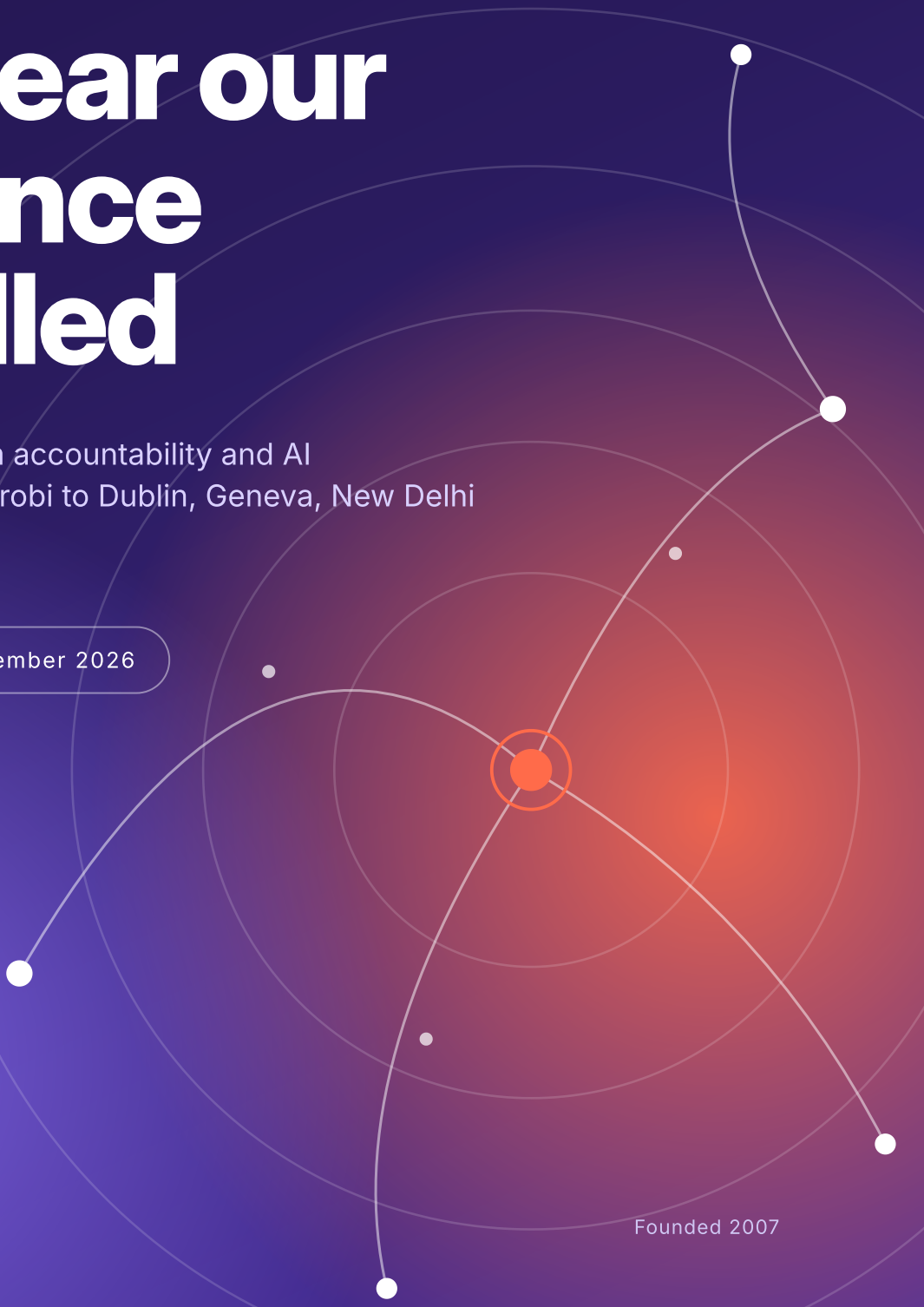
INTERNET WITHOUT BORDERS

ANNUAL REPORT

The year our evidence travelled

Digital rights, platform accountability and AI governance, from Nairobi to Dublin, Geneva, New Delhi and Cotonou.

November 2025 – November 2026



internetwithoutborders.org

Founded 2007

A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This was the year our evidence travelled.

Data collected post by post by Kenyan organisations ended up in front of European regulators in Dublin, on the stage of the United Nations' AI summit in Geneva, and in the pages of a leading law and policy publication. That journey is what Internet Sans Frontières exists for: making sure the people most exposed to online harms are also the people who shape the rules.

The successes are concrete. With our partners in the KenSafeSpace coalition we published *Voices at Risk*, the result of six months of citizen-led monitoring of harmful speech in Kenya. We closed a 20-month programme funded by the European Union with its targets met or exceeded and every euro accounted for. Our Africa team spoke up, on the record and on air, when Gabon cut its citizens off from social media and then moved to make online anonymity illegal. And we opened a new chapter on artificial intelligence, arguing from New Delhi to Cotonou that accountability cannot be left to companies and governments alone.

The challenges were just as real, and I want to name them plainly. Visa uncertainty forced us to move our flagship advocacy mission from the United States to Ireland. RightsCon, the largest gathering of our community, was cancelled days before opening in Lusaka. Major platforms kept retreating from content moderation while AI tools made abuse cheaper to produce, especially against women. And like most digital rights organisations, we worked in a funding climate that asks civil society to do more with less. We spent part of the year preparing what comes next.

What I take from these twelve months is that a small, well-networked organisation can carry weight far beyond its size when its work is rigorous and locally led. We adapted without lowering our standards. Dublin turned out to be a better destination than the one we had planned. The cancellation of RightsCon strengthened the coalition that condemned it.

Kenya votes in 2027. AI systems are being deployed across Africa faster than the rules that should govern them. We know what needs to be built, and we have shown we can deliver. To the partners and funders who made this year possible, thank you. To those reading us for the first time, I hope this report convinces you that we are worth building with.

Julie Owono
Executive Director, Internet Sans Frontières

> **A small, well-networked organisation can carry weight far beyond its size when its work is rigorous and locally led.**

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OVERVIEW

The year at a glance

Between November 2025 and November 2026, ISF published a flagship report, closed an EU-funded programme, defended internet access and civic space in Gabon and Zambia, and took African perspectives on AI to three continents.

129
harmful content incidents documented in Kenya, against a target of 100

25
Kenyan civil society organisations reached by training, 5 mentored throughout

97%
of programme budget executed, all declared expenditure accepted

100%
visa approval for the 5 Kenyan fellows of the Dublin advocacy mission

132
organisations united with ISF on the cancellation of RightsCon 2026

3
essays in *Just Security*, including the opener of its AI accountability series

+1,033%
growth in new LinkedIn followers, January to February 2026

1
flagship report, *Voices at Risk*, with recommendations to four audiences

Twelve months of milestones

Nov. 2025 Publication of *Voices at Risk* and companion analysis in *Just Security*

Jan. 2026 Learning and Advocacy Expedition to Dublin; coalition statement on AI-generated sexual abuse

Feb. 2026 *Voices at Risk* presented in Nairobi; final coalition workshop; statement on Gabon's social media blackout; India AI Impact Summit

March 2026 Online dialogue with CIPESA, "Defending Digital Rights in Africa"; *Just Security* essay on AI accountability

May 2026 Statement on the cancellation of RightsCon 2026 in Lusaka

July 2026 ISF co-moderates a session at the AI for Good Global Summit, Geneva

Sept. 2026 Julie Owono opens the *Just Security* series on AI accountability

Oct. 2026 Africa Director Abdelkerim Yacoub Koundougoumi speaks at the Africa Digital Expo in Cotonou and on TV5MONDE about Gabon's online identification law

Nov. 2026 West Africa lead Qemal Affagnon sets out ISF's position on AI dependency in *La Nation* (Benin)

ABOUT ISF

Who we are

Internet Sans Frontières (ISF, Internet Without Borders) is a French non-profit founded in 2007 that defends digital rights and freedoms, with a focus on Africa and the Global South.

We work where three things meet: access to the internet, the governance of online platforms, and now the governance of artificial intelligence. Our method is consistent across these fields.

Access
to the internet, against shutdowns and censorship

Platforms
governed with accountability and respect for rights

AI
governed with the people it affects at the table

Our method



Document

We train local organisations to collect evidence of online harms and censorship, using methodologies we have developed, such as NoBadMop for monitoring hate speech.



Convene

We build and support coalitions, from KenSafeSpace in Kenya to the NetRights coalition across Africa, and we are a member of the Global Network Initiative.



Advocate

We carry that evidence to the places where decisions are made: regulators, platforms, courts of public opinion and international forums.

ISF is led from France by Executive Director Julie Owono, a lawyer and an inaugural member of the Meta Oversight Board, with an Africa team that speaks for the organisation in Central and West Africa.

WHERE THE WORK TRAVELLED THIS YEAR



Nairobi
Evidence collected, report launched

Dublin
Regulators, researchers, civil society

New Delhi
India AI Impact Summit

Geneva
AI for Good Global Summit

Cotonou
Africa Digital Expo

FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME

KenSafeSpace

KenSafeSpace turned five Kenyan human rights organisations into producers of evidence on online harms, and that evidence is now shaping the debate ahead of Kenya's 2027 elections.

The programme, funded by the European Union and led by Internews, brought ISF together with the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE), KICTANet, Mzalendo Trust, Tribeless Youth and Watoto Watch Network. Its most visible results fell in this reporting year.

Voices at Risk

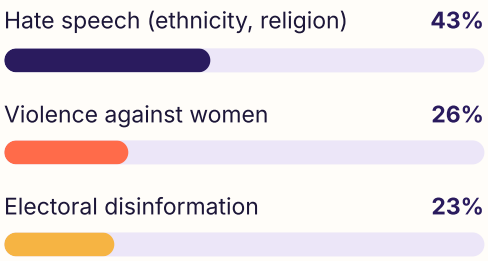
On 26 November 2025 we published *Voices at Risk: Moderating Without Stifling, Protecting Without Censoring in Kenya*. The report draws on six months of monitoring by coalition members, who documented and analysed 129 incidents using ISF's NoBadMop methodology, Internews' Harmful Speech Tracking Toolkit and the Dangerous Speech framework.

The findings are stark. Hate speech, mostly targeting ethnicity and religion, made up about 43% of the content observed. About 26% involved violence against women, female politicians in particular, and about 23% spread false information about elections.

Independent work by Code for Africa identified the same trends, which strengthened confidence in a methodology built and run by local organisations.

KEY FINDINGS

What the coalition observed online in Kenya



Approximate share of content observed. Source: *Voices at Risk*, ISF and the KenSafeSpace coalition, November 2025.



129 incidents documented against a target of 100, across more than 200 pages of evidence.

Four audiences, four recommendations

Platforms
Moderate proactively in local languages, including coded and abusive content.

Authorities
Keep the internet on and stop using the law against online expression.

Civil society
Maintain coordinated, multilingual observatories of harmful speech.

Donors
Fund rapid alert and response capacity before electoral crises, not during them.

2027 Kenya's next general elections. The coalition now has trained monitors, a tested methodology and a baseline to measure against.

KENSAFESPACE · INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

From Nairobi to Dublin and back

From 25 to 29 January 2026, five Kenyan fellows and the ISF team travelled to Dublin, home to the European headquarters of many technology companies and a centre of Digital Services Act enforcement. They worked with the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, University College Dublin's Centre for Digital Policy and Dublin City University. Every fellow obtained a visa, after ISF opened direct channels with Irish consular authorities in Nairobi and Abuja.

The mission had originally been planned for the United States. Moving it was the hardest management decision of the programme, and it paid off: fellows gained first-hand exposure to a working regulatory regime, and relationships that have continued since.

From Dublin, the coalition issued a public statement on AI tools used to "undress" women and children, calling for shared standards on AI-generated sexual abuse and for Global South voices in AI governance. Our November report had already flagged the problem on X.

On 3 February 2026 we presented *Voices at Risk* to 32 Kenyan stakeholders in Nairobi, and on 19 February a final technical workshop gathered close to 30 participants. More than 80% of those assessed scored above the expected competency threshold.

THE DUBLIN MISSION

When
25 to 29 January 2026

Who
5 fellows from BAKE, KICTANet, Mzalendo Trust, Tribeless Youth and Watoto Watch Network, with the ISF team

Hosts
Irish Council for Civil Liberties, University College Dublin, Dublin City University

5	100%	32	80%+
Kenyan fellows in Dublin	visa approval rate	stakeholders at the Nairobi presentation	of participants assessed above the competency threshold

What we learned

ACCOMPANIMENT

Training is not enough without months of accompaniment. Regular mentoring is what turned a workshop into lasting capacity.

ACCESS TO DATA

Manual monitoring takes two to four hours per piece of content, and platform algorithms adapt to the monitor. That is itself a finding about how hard platforms make public-interest research.

INCLUSION

Women were the majority in our trainings and strategy meetings but only one of five Dublin fellows, a gap we intend to close in future international missions.

ADVOCACY

Defending access and civic space

ISF responded publicly to the two most serious attacks on digital civic space in its regions this year, in Gabon and in Zambia.

GABON

From blackout to mandatory identification

In February 2026, Gabon's High Authority of Communication ordered the suspension of Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. ISF condemned the decision on 25 February. We acknowledged that curbing online hate speech is a legitimate aim, and argued that a nationwide blackout is a disproportionate way to pursue it. We documented the cost to small businesses, students and journalists, and called for immediate restoration under the banner #BringBackOurSocialMedia.

The suspension lasted eight months. When it gave way in October to a law requiring users to register their real identity to access social networks, our Africa Director, Abdelkerim Yacoub Koundougoumi, explained the risks on TV5MONDE: sensitive data with no clarity on who can access it, and a precedent other governments may copy.

ISF has called on platforms not to become instruments of identification and surveillance.

ZAMBIA

The cancellation of RightsCon

Days before RightsCon 2026 was due to open in Lusaka on 5 May, the Zambian government cancelled it. ISF joined 132 organisations of the NetRights coalition in condemning the decision and published its own statement on 1 May.

Our message went beyond solidarity: governments that claim to support a free and open internet must fund digital rights work durably and defend civic space diplomatically. Regulation alone will not do it.

132 digital rights organisations stood together through the NetRights coalition.

6 MARCH 2026 · ONLINE

Convening African civil society

Our Africa team convened the online dialogue "Defending Digital Rights in Africa: Regulation, Moderation and Civic Space". Qemal Affagnon of ISF and Patricia Ainemababazi of CIPESA discussed how civil society can document digital rights risks, engage platforms and regulators, and build coalitions for democratic digital governance.

8 months
of social media suspension in Gabon

2 statements
published by ISF on Gabon and on RightsCon

TV5MONDE
carried ISF's analysis of Gabon's identification law

NEW CHAPTER

AI governance, seen from Africa

This year ISF made AI accountability a core part of its mandate, on the strength of what we documented in Kenya: AI-generated abuse is already a human rights problem in the places with the least say over how these systems are built.

Accountability beyond companies and governments

Julie Owono developed the argument in *Just Security* across the year. In November 2025 she showed, with Kenya as the case study, how the global retreat from content moderation endangers free expression. In March 2026 she made the case that AI accountability cannot rest on companies and governments alone. In September 2026 she opened the publication's series on AI accountability with an essay on the gap between governance frameworks and real accountability.

She carried the same message to the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi on 16 February 2026, on a panel about global standards for AI advisory boards, and to the AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva on 8 July 2026. There, ISF co-moderated a conversation on who gets to shape AI's future, starting from a simple imbalance: African creators supply the culture and data that AI systems learn from, and have almost no voice in how those systems are governed.

Infrastructure and sovereignty

Our Africa team took the argument to the continent's own forums. At the Africa Digital Expo in Cotonou in October 2026, Abdelkerim Yacoub Koundougoumi argued for shared, open-access digital infrastructure with participatory governance.

In the Beninese daily *La Nation*, Qemal Affagnon set out a nuanced position on dependency. No country controls the whole technology chain, and the real risk is having no alternative and no skills to switch provider.

THE STARTING POINT



About 20% of world population



Under 1% of data centre capacity

Africa's share, as presented by ISF at the Africa Digital Expo, Cotonou, October 2026.

WHAT ISF ASKS OF AFRICAN STATES

- Data protection frameworks
- Public laboratories able to evaluate the risks of AI models
- Budgets to sustain them

IN *JUST SECURITY*

Nov. 2025
The global retreat from content moderation, with Kenya as the case

March 2026
Why AI accountability cannot rest on companies and governments alone

Sept. 2026
The AI accountability gap, opening essay of the series

REACH AND PEOPLE

Public voice and reach

ISF's analysis reached policy audiences in English and French this year, through international publications, broadcast media and our own channels.

PUBLICATIONS

Three essays in *Just Security*, read by lawyers, policymakers and national security practitioners, including the opening piece of its AI accountability series.

BROADCAST, PRESS

TV5MONDE on Gabon's identification law; *La Nation* (Benin) on AI sovereignty.

TEACHING

Julie Owono moderated the session "State Power and the Limits of Governance" at the Pan-Africa Center for AI Ethics summer school on 30 October 2026.

+1,033%

new organic LinkedIn followers around the Dublin mission and Nairobi launch, with impressions up 505%. Nearly three-quarters of traffic came from desktop, a professional audience.

Governance and team

ISF is a French non-profit association governed by a stable Board of Directors (Conseil d'Administration). The work is carried by a small team.

AY — Archippe Yepmou
PRESIDENT
Presides over the association and submitted the final KenSafeSpace report.

JO — Julie Owono
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
A lawyer by training, inaugural member of the Meta Oversight Board, member of the Board of Editors of *Just Security*, and affiliate of the Berkman Klein Center at Harvard.

AK — Abdelkerim Yacoub Koundougoumi
AFRICA DIRECTOR
Leads ISF's public advocacy in Central Africa.

QA — Qemal Affagnon
WEST AFRICA LEAD
Holds a PhD from the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin.

ED — Emmanuel Diokh
PROJECT ASSISTANT
Supported the KenSafeSpace coalition and took part in the Dublin mission.

OM — Ombretta Minkue
COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT
In charge of ISF's communications and digital outreach.

A lean structure

For KenSafeSpace, this core was reinforced by a dedicated project team covering coordination, communications, accounting and administration. The permanent structure stays lean, and project staff are added as grants require, so that funding goes into programmes.

STEWARDSHIP

Financial overview

Sound, verified management: 97% of the programme budget executed, 100% of declared expenditure accepted, and a positive closing balance.

KenSafeSpace, ISF's main programme of the period, ran for 20 months with the support of the European Union. Its final financial report was approved in full in October 2026.

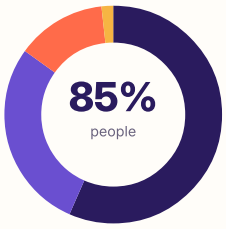
97%
of the programme budget executed

100%
of declared expenditure accepted after review

4 of 5
budget headings executed at 100%

<1%
of spending went to bank charges, across several currencies

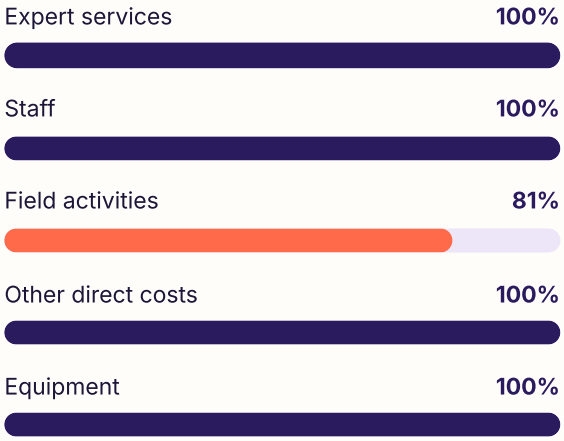
WHERE THE MONEY WENT



Expert services	56.5%
Staff	28.3%
Field activities	13.3%
Other costs	1.9%

Share of total programme spending over 20 months. Source: approved final financial report.

BUDGET EXECUTED, BY HEADING



The only underspend came from activity costs that proved lower than planned.

Three facts that matter to future partners

Funds went to people and programmes.

About 85% of spending paid for the staff and experts who delivered the work, and about 13% for field activities such as the Dublin mission and the Nairobi trainings.

The budget was respected line by line.

Four of five budget headings were executed at 100%, and every euro declared was accepted.

The programme closed with a positive balance.

ISF managed its cash flow so that every planned activity was delivered, within the overall budget.

Priorities for 2027. Our financial priorities build on this record: growing multi-year core support and building a working-capital reserve.

LOOKING AHEAD

2027 priorities

The next twelve months will test what this year built, and four priorities follow directly from our results.

01

Election readiness in Kenya

Kenya votes in 2027. The coalition has trained monitors, a tested methodology and a baseline. It needs the resources to run an observatory and a rapid alert capacity before the campaign, as *Voices at Risk* recommends.

02

Replication beyond Kenya

Several organisations and development partners have expressed interest in adapting the NoBadMop and harmful speech tracking methodologies to other African countries. Francophone Central and West Africa, where our Africa team is already active, are the natural next step.

03

AI accountability with African voices

We will turn this year's analysis into practice: convening African governments, researchers and civil society on the governance of AI models deployed on the continent, and working with partners on open, auditable tools governed by the communities that use them.

04

A stronger organisation

Multi-year funding partnerships and a redesigned website that reflects our work on AI governance.

WORK WITH US

A tested model: locally led evidence, a network that reaches regulators and platforms, and a record of delivering on budget.

We welcome conversations with foundations, development partners and companies that want African civil society at the table where AI and platform rules are written.

internetwithoutborders.org

INTERNET SANS FRONTIÈRES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ISF thanks the European Union and Internews for their support of KenSafeSpace; our coalition partners BAKE, KICTANet, Mzalendo Trust, Tribeless Youth and Watoto Watch Network; the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, University College Dublin and Dublin City University; CIPESA, the NetRights coalition and the Global Network Initiative; and every team member, fellow and volunteer who gave this year its substance.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

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From Dublin to Nairobi, KenSafeSpace Coalition statement, 27 January 2026 · internetwithoutborders.org

Gabon, ISF statement on the blocking of social media, 25 February 2026 · internetwithoutborders.org

RightsCon 2026, ISF statement on the cancellation, 1 May 2026 · internetwithoutborders.org

Julie Owono in Just Security · justsecurity.org/author/owonojulie

ISF on LinkedIn · linkedin.com/company/internet-sans-fronti-res

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