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Strengthening Ethical Journalism with AI in Tanzania

Digital Agenda for Tanzania Initiative (DA4TI), Tanzania

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ABOUT NETHOPE CONNECTED

NetHope Connected is a global community and digital program designed by, for and with nonprofits, to help small to mid-sized organizations strengthen digital capacity at their own pace. It does this through learning resources, peer connection and practical guidance for adopting AI and technology responsibly.

This case study focuses on NetHope Connected's AI grant work, supporting Connectors to explore responsible, purpose-driven AI.

Journalists in Tanzania are already using generative AI tools, but most have had no training in how to use them without putting their newsrooms at risk. With support from the NetHope Connected AI grant, DA4TI ran a two-day workshop in Iringa for 20 journalists and civic media practitioners from the Southern Highlands, a part of the country that capacity-building programs rarely reach. The workshop helped them use AI responsibly: verifying what it produces, disclosing when they use it and remaining accountable for the final work. Participants left with guidelines they had written themselves, in Swahili, for their own organizations.



A session on day two of the workshop in Iringa, with participants seated in a round-table format.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Digital Agenda for Tanzania Initiative is a Tanzanian nonprofit founded in 2021. It works on digital literacy, digital rights, digital inclusion and digital safety, alongside government, industry and local communities. Its regular programs include a quarterly digital safety workshop series and an annual Digital Agenda School on Internet Governance, both aimed at journalists, researchers, lawyers, students and digital rights advocates.

Peter Mmbando
Founder and Executive Director

Bonface Witaba
Project Lead

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DA4TI

The problem: AI is already reshaping journalism, and few are prepared

01

AI is already part of the information environment Tanzanian journalists work in. Through the COVID-19 period and around a national election, DA4TI watched AI being used to spread disinformation, hate speech and cyberbullying. At the same time, the team saw international newsrooms use AI responsibly to verify what was happening on the ground, from satellite imagery to cross-checking sources.

> *"We saw so much disinformation and misinformation, hate speech and cyberbullying, and it affected women especially, journalists, politicians and upcoming leaders."*
>
> Peter Mmbando, Founder and Executive Director, DA4TI

Many local journalists, by contrast, have had no guidance on how to use generative AI tools safely. That is the gap DA4TI set out to close. The risks run in two directions. The first is publishing unverified AI-generated content that erodes trust. The second is breaching Tanzania's strict media regulations, under which a single violation can lead to a media house being shut down for up to 90 days. Training on these risks rarely reaches beyond the major cities, so DA4TI took it to the Southern Highlands.

Why a training program was the right response

The journalists were already using the technology. What they lacked was the knowledge to use it well: when to trust it, how to check it and how to stay accountable and safe while doing so. A hands-on training program built around their own context could address that directly, and it was designed around three aims.

01

Enable informed tool selection

Most participants knew only one tool, usually ChatGPT. The training introduced a wider range, so journalists could compare and test them and choose the right one for each task.

02

Keep the journalist accountable

The training showed journalists how to use AI to support their work, for research, editing, translation and verification, while keeping responsibility for judgement, fact-checking and disclosure.

03

Reduce regulatory and reputational risk

In a strict regulatory environment, careless use of AI has consequences for the journalist and for the media house they work for. Training in responsible, verifiable use protects both.

THE PRINCIPLE AT THE CENTER

The training was built around one principle: a person who uses AI is accountable for what it produces. Four practices follow from it: disclose when AI has been used, verify every source before publication, keep an editor in the chain and, if something goes wrong, say so publicly and correct it.

> *"When you use AI, at the end of the day, it is the human being that is using AI that is accountable. AI is not accountable to anyone."*
>
> Bonface Witaba, Project Lead, DA4TI

Designing the training

02

The NetHope Connected AI grant funded the training. Its budget set the limits of the project, and most of the design decisions described below were made to fit within it.

Who it was for and how it was tailored

The audience was journalists and civic media practitioners. To make sure the training suited everyone in the room, DA4TI set clear entry criteria in the call for applications. Applicants needed to have used an AI tool at least once and to understand both English and Swahili. Selection also favored small media houses, mainly community radio, television and digital outlets, from the Southern Highlands. Screening applicants this way meant facilitators could pitch the content at the right level from the start.

Who shaped the design

DA4TI's own facilitators developed the training content, drawing on the organization's experience in digital rights and its close relationships across the media and civil society sectors in the region. Building it in-house meant the training was grounded in Tanzanian examples and the regulatory risks participants face. The curriculum also drew on two external courses the project lead, Bonface Witaba, had completed: the free NetHope AI trainings, including a month-long course with an assessment at the end, and a course on the ethical use of AI in the newsroom run by Oxford University and the Thomson Reuters Foundation. DA4TI shared links to the free NetHope AI trainings so participants could keep learning after the workshop.

What the curriculum covered

The curriculum moved from foundations to applied practice.

01	02	03	04
Foundations	**Ethics and accountability**	**AI in journalism**	**AI for civil society organizations**
The history of AI, how machine learning and deep learning work, natural language processing and generative AI.	Bias, misinformation, disclosure of AI use and where human oversight has to sit in a newsroom workflow.	Research, news writing support, fact-checking, summarization, translation and audience engagement, alongside the risks of deepfakes, fabricated sources and loss of credibility.	Grant writing, translation, community outreach and impact reporting.



Journalists and civic media practitioners from the Southern Highlands during a training session.

Delivering the training

03

How it ran

The workshop ran over two days in Iringa, with a mix of presentations, hands-on exercises, quizzes and open discussion. The format was deliberately conversational, closer to a round-table than a lecture, so that participants would do most of the talking. Facilitation moved between English and Swahili throughout.

The second day was given over to practice. Participants compared and rated a range of AI tools, fact-checked a social media post and ran a reverse image search before producing a verification report. They used AI to build emergency awareness materials on public health and cyclone safety. They also drafted AI guidelines and disclosure statements for their own organizations.



Bonface Witaba, Project Lead, presenting on the first day of the workshop.

Impact

The training reached 20 practitioners from 20 organizations in the Southern Highlands: 17 media organizations across radio, television and digital media, plus three civic media and civil society organizations.

Participants gained practical experience using AI for content creation, editing, research, translation and verification, and a clearer grasp of the ethical questions that come with it. By the end, they could draft AI-assisted articles and had begun exploring responsible AI adoption in their own organizations, including internal AI policies. The training also brought journalists and civil society actors together, laying a foundation for future collaboration.

Three responses suggested the training would have an effect beyond the workshop. One participant said he intended to propose an AI department to his manager. Larger media houses that took part asked DA4TI to return and train more of their staff. The group itself proposed setting up an AI hub in Iringa, a place to keep learning from one another once the workshop was over.

CHALLENGES IN ROLLOUT

More demand than the budget could hold

More than 30 people applied, but the budget covered 20 places along with the travel and accommodation each participant needed, so the others could not be offered a place.

Two days is not enough

Both the facilitators and the participants said the workshop was too short for what it was trying to do. Three or four days would give the practical work and the policy drafting the time they need.

"Future training sessions could be extended, even up to one week, to allow more time for practical learning. The facilitators have a lot of knowledge to share, but the time is limited."

Chafumbwe Chesco, journalist, Furaha FM, Iringa

Sustaining the learning

Further resources would be required to follow up on how participants are using their learning in practice. A WhatsApp group keeps the cohort in contact and questions still get answered there, but the team is clear that this is not the same as knowing whether the training changed anything. Visiting the newsrooms to see how the guidelines are being used would show that. DA4TI is actively seeking funds for this.

What the team learned

04

> *"Don't end up being a fellow just attending. Be a mentor to someone. If they stay with the knowledge, it will end up nowhere."*
>
> Peter Mmbando, Founder and Executive Director, DA4TI

What went well

Requiring some AI knowledge to apply. Setting a basic entry level let the team spend the two days on ethical practice and hands-on work instead of the basics.

Putting media and civil society in the same room. The cohort mixed media organizations with civic media and civil society groups, so they could share experience across the two sectors and identify challenges they had in common.

Teaching by doing. Comparing tools, fact-checking a real post and drafting guidelines for their own organization gave participants something concrete to take back.

What they would do differently

Design the follow-up into the project from the start. This is the reflection DA4TI offers most strongly to others. Planning and budgeting for follow-up belongs in the original design, so there is a way to see whether the training changed practice.

Match the length to the curriculum. A curriculum that runs from how machine learning works to drafting organizational guidelines needs more than two days to cover each part in enough depth. Next time, the team would scope the curriculum to the time and budget available, either narrowing the content to fit two days or planning a longer workshop from the start.

What comes next

STRENGTHENING WHAT EXISTS

- Set up a virtual community of practice, open to applicants who could not be offered a place, so that learning and resource sharing continue after the workshop.
- Support the participants' proposal for an AI hub in Iringa as a base for mentorship and peer learning.
- Help participating organizations turn the guidelines drafted in the workshop into adopted AI policies and governance frameworks, as participants requested.
- Secure funding for follow-up visits to participating newsrooms, to see how the guidelines are being used in practice.

SCALING

- Replicate the workshop in Njombe and Mbeya, the neighboring Southern Highlands regions, treating Iringa as the pilot.
- Move towards a train-the-trainers model, so that a cohort in each region can pass the material on without DA4TI delivering every session.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Seek partners willing to support DA4TI's quarterly digital safety workshop series and its annual Digital Agenda School on Internet Governance over several years, instead of one activity at a time.
- Write further funding proposals that build on the NetHope grant, with the aim of reaching applicants from regions the first workshop could not accommodate.

Learn more about NetHope Connected

NetHope Connected is a global community and digital program designed by, for and with nonprofits, to help small to mid-sized organizations strengthen digital capacity at their own pace.

The NetHope Connected AI grant program is one of the programs in the community, where we support grantees like DA4TI to design, test and run AI responsibly, and publish the results as case studies like this one.

GET IN TOUCH

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Join NetHope Connected

SCAN TO JOIN

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