



MATAHARI

# *Digital Health and Rights Project Final Evaluation Report*

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*Final Evaluation Report | 6 May 2026*



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Matahari Global Solutions is a global health consultancy firm focusing on global health solutions with local relevance. Registered in Kuala Lumpur and with consultants based globally, our work has covered a wide range of global health issues, including pandemic response, transgender legal recognition and impact on access to healthcare, paediatric TB and impacts of advocacy, and the evaluation of multi-country HIV projects, across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America.

Commissioned by the University of Warwick, this final evaluation of the Digital Health and Rights Project (DHRP) was conducted between February and April 2026. The evaluation assessed the design, implementation and outcomes of the DHRP Botnar III grant across four countries – Colombia, Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam – applying the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation team conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions with consortium members, community advisory team members, and external stakeholders, reviewed primary and secondary project documentation, and applied a Most Significant Change methodology to capture the perspectives of CAT members and implementers. Our thanks to Meg Davis and Oladipo Akinmade for trusting us with this evaluation.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

Acronym	Full Term
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AOF	Anti-Oppression Framework
CAT	Community Advisory Team
C-CAT	Colombia Community Advisory Team
CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism
CIPESA	Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa
COLEV	No available acronym breakdown, refers to an interdisciplinary research group at Universidad de los Andes focused on COVID-19 in Colombia
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DHRP	Digital Health and Rights Project
DPA	Data Protection Act
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
G-CAT	Ghana Community Advisory Team
GHS	Ghana Health Service
GNP+	Global Network of People Living with HIV
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICASA	International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
K-CAT	Kenya Community Advisory Team
KELIN	Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and others
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Country
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSC	Most Significant Change
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PI	Principal Investigator
RD	Restless Development
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STOPAIDS	UK civil society coalition on HIV and AIDS
TOC	Theory of Change

Acronym	Full Term
T-PAR	Transnational Participatory Action Research
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
V-CAT	Vietnam Community Advisory Team
VNP+	Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV
WHO	World Health Organization
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
YPLHIV	Young People Living with HIV

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## Executive Summary (English)

The Digital Health and Rights Project (DHRP) is a consortium launched in 2019. The consortium has conducted research, advocacy and education activities with young adults<sup>1</sup> and civil society in several countries with support from Fondation Botnar, Open Society University Network, and University of Warwick.

From 2023 to 2026, the consortium held a larger-scale transnational participatory action research project (T-PAR) in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, and Vietnam, titled *The Future of Human Rights in the Digital Age*, funded by Fondation Botnar. The grant was hosted by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (CIM) at the University of Warwick (UK), and governed collaboratively with KELIN (Kenya), STOPAIDS (UK), the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), Restless Development, Privacy International, and Universidad de los Andes (Colombia), as well as Community Advisory Team (CAT) representatives from each study country. It was implemented with support from Fundacion Karisma (Colombia), the Ghana Network of Persons living with HIV (NAP+ Ghana), Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+). *The Future of Human Rights in the Digital Age* sought to generate community-led evidence on the digital health and rights of young adults living with HIV and other marginalised populations, and to translate that evidence into national and global advocacy.

This evaluation, conducted by Matahari Global Solutions between February and April 2026, applied the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability to assess the project's design, implementation and outcomes across all four countries and globally.

The evaluation finds the DHRP to have been highly relevant, addressing a field that remains underserved by mainstream global health actors - a gap independently validated by partners at the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria ("the Global Fund"). The project's T-PAR model was both its most distinctive feature and its most significant contribution: by embedding CAT at every stage of the research process, and project governance the DHRP generated findings of demonstrable authenticity and produced a cohort of young advocates who are intending to continue this work beyond the grant's lifetime. The DHRP consortium will also remain active.

The DHRP's adoption of T-PAR as its methodological core was not incidental to its outcomes but constitutive of them: the authenticity of the research findings, the legitimacy of the advocacy, and the sustained engagement of young people across all four countries were each a direct product of communities being embedded in the research process from inception rather than consulted at its margins.

Key impacts include the consideration of DHRP outputs for embedding into the future WHO's *Global Strategy on Digital Health 2028-2033* normative frameworks at the UN level; CAT members testifying before the national legislature in Colombia; and community-level shifts in digital rights consciousness across all four countries. The bilingual Spanish/English Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on digital health and rights, launched on Coursera in December 2025, represents a durable knowledge asset that will remain accessible beyond the project's close.

The evaluation identifies resource under-budgeting at the lead institution, translation as a chronically insufficient line item, and HR instability in Ghana as structural efficiency gaps. Progress on national government engagement was constrained in Ghana by the hostile legal environment for LGBTQI+ populations and administrative restructuring, and in Vietnam due to the need for longer timeframes needed to create policy change - factors external to the project's control. All of the three long-term outcomes, planned for the full consortium and thus extending beyond the timeline of this period under review, are within sight. The DHRP outputs have progressed along expected pathways.

### Key findings:

- Strong evidence of meaningful participation, youth and community leadership across all four countries
- Strong evidence of practical digital safety and response capacities built among CAT members and wider communities
- Strong evidence of the translation of complex digital health and digital rights concepts into community language and practice
- Documented challenges for an academic organisation to administratively and equitably host a large international grant with civil society and Global South partners with regards to flexibility and adaptability
- Documented stronger commitments by WHO to addressing human rights and gender in digital governance
- Documented normative embedding of digital human rights in Global Fund guidance and funding.
- Limited evidence on policy traction at the national level, particularly in Ghana and Vietnam, due to external contextual constraints
- Limited evidence on structural sustainability beyond individual capacity, in the context of shrinking international funding

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<sup>1</sup> Young adults understood here as age range 18-30.

## Resumen Ejecutivo/Executive Summary (Spanish)

El Proyecto de Salud Digital y Derechos (DHRP, por sus siglas en inglés) es un consorcio fundado en 2019. El consorcio ha llevado a cabo actividades de investigación, incidencia política y educación con jóvenes adultos y sociedad civil en varios países, con el apoyo de Fondation Botnar, la Red de Universidades de la Sociedad Abierta (Open Society University Network) y la Universidad de Warwick.

Entre 2023 y 2026, el consorcio ejecutó un proyecto de investigación acción participativa transnacional (T-PAR) de mayor escala en Colombia, Ghana, Kenia y Vietnam, titulado *El Futuro de los Derechos Humanos en la Era Digital*, financiado por Fondation Botnar. La subvención fue alojada por el Centro de Metodologías Interdisciplinarias (CIM) de la Universidad de Warwick (Reino Unido), y gobernada de manera colaborativa con KELIN (Kenia), STOPAIDS (Reino Unido), la Red Mundial de Personas que Viven con el VIH (GNP+), Restless Development, Privacy International y la Universidad de los Andes (Colombia), así como con representantes de los Equipos Asesores Comunitarios (CAT) de cada país participante. Su implementación contó con el apoyo de Fundación Karisma (Colombia), la Red de Personas que Viven con el VIH de Ghana (NAP+ Ghana) y la Red de Personas que Viven con el VIH de Vietnam (VNP+). *El Futuro de los Derechos Humanos en la Era Digital* buscó generar evidencia liderada por comunidades sobre la salud digital y los derechos de jóvenes adultos que viven con VIH y otras poblaciones marginalizadas, y traducir dicha evidencia en incidencia política a nivel nacional y global.

Esta evaluación, realizada por Matahari Global Solutions entre febrero y abril de 2026, aplicó los criterios OCDE-CAD de pertinencia, coherencia, eficacia, eficiencia, impacto y sostenibilidad para valorar el diseño, la implementación y los resultados del proyecto en los cuatro países y a nivel global.

La evaluación concluye que el DHRP ha sido altamente pertinente, abordando un campo que sigue siendo insuficientemente atendido por los principales actores de la salud global — una brecha validada de manera independiente por socios de la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS), la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos (ACNUDH) y el Fondo Mundial para la Lucha contra el SIDA, la Tuberculosis y la Malaria ("el Fondo Mundial"). El modelo T-PAR del proyecto fue tanto su característica más distintiva como su contribución más significativa: al incorporar a los CAT en cada etapa del proceso de investigación y en la gobernanza del proyecto, el DHRP generó hallazgos de demostrable autenticidad y formó una cohorte de jóvenes defensores que tienen la intención de continuar este trabajo más allá de la vigencia de la subvención. El consorcio DHRP también permanecerá activo.

La adopción por parte del DHRP del T-PAR como núcleo metodológico no fue incidental a sus resultados, sino constitutiva de ellos: la autenticidad de los hallazgos de la investigación, la legitimidad de la incidencia política y el compromiso sostenido de los jóvenes en los cuatro países fueron, cada uno, producto directo de que las comunidades estuvieran integradas en el proceso de investigación desde el inicio, en lugar de ser consultadas en sus márgenes.

Entre los impactos clave se incluyen la consideración de los productos del DHRP para su incorporación en la futura Estrategia Global de Salud Digital 2028-2033 de la OMS y en marcos normativos a nivel de las Naciones Unidas; el testimonio de miembros del CAT ante el poder legislativo nacional en Colombia; y cambios a nivel comunitario en la conciencia sobre derechos digitales en los cuatro países. El Curso Masivo Abierto en Línea (MOOC) bilingüe español/inglés sobre salud digital y derechos, lanzado en Coursera en diciembre de 2025, representa un activo de conocimiento duradero que permanecerá accesible más allá del cierre del proyecto.

La evaluación identifica la insuficiencia presupuestaria en la institución líder, la traducción como una partida presupuestaria crónicamente insuficiente y la inestabilidad de recursos humanos en Ghana como brechas estructurales de eficiencia. El avance en el relacionamiento con los gobiernos nacionales estuvo limitado en Ghana por el ambiente jurídico adverso para las poblaciones LGBTQI+ y la reestructuración administrativa, y en Vietnam por los plazos más largos necesarios para generar cambios en políticas públicas — factores externos al control del proyecto. Los tres resultados a largo plazo, planificados para el consorcio en su conjunto y que por tanto se extienden más allá del período objeto de esta revisión, están al alcance. Los productos del DHRP han avanzado por las trayectorias previstas.

### Hallazgos clave:

- Evidencia sólida de participación significativa y liderazgo juvenil y comunitario en los cuatro países
- Evidencia sólida de capacidades prácticas de seguridad digital y respuesta desarrolladas entre los miembros del CAT y comunidades más amplias
- Evidencia sólida de la traducción de conceptos complejos de salud digital y derechos digitales al lenguaje comunitario y a la práctica
- Desafíos documentados para que una organización académica administre de manera equitativa una gran subvención internacional con socios de la sociedad civil y del Sur Global, en términos de flexibilidad y adaptabilidad
- Compromisos más sólidos documentados por parte de la OMS para abordar los derechos humanos y el género en la gobernanza digital
- Integración normativa documentada de los derechos humanos digitales en las orientaciones y financiamiento del Fondo Mundial
- Evidencia limitada sobre avances en políticas a nivel nacional, particularmente en Ghana y Vietnam, debido a restricciones contextuales externas

- Evidencia limitada sobre sostenibilidad estructural más allá de la capacidad individual, en un contexto de reducción del financiamiento internacional

## Tóm tắt điều hành/Executive Summary (Vietnamese)

Dự án Sức khỏe Kỹ thuật số và Quyền (DHRP) là một tập đoàn được thành lập vào năm 2019. Tập đoàn đã triển khai các hoạt động nghiên cứu, vận động chính sách và giáo dục cùng với thanh niên và xã hội dân sự tại nhiều quốc gia với sự hỗ trợ của Fondation Botnar, Mạng lưới Đại học Xã hội Mở (Open Society University Network) và Đại học Warwick.

Từ năm 2023 đến 2026, tập đoàn đã triển khai một dự án nghiên cứu hành động có sự tham gia xuyên quốc gia (T-PAR) quy mô lớn hơn tại Colombia, Ghana, Kenya và Việt Nam, có tên *Tương lai của Quyền con người trong Kỷ nguyên Kỹ thuật số*, được tài trợ bởi Fondation Botnar. Khoản tài trợ được quản lý bởi Trung tâm Phương pháp luận Liên ngành (CIM) tại Đại học Warwick (Anh), và được quản trị cộng tác cùng với KELIN (Kenya), STOPAIDS (Anh), Mạng lưới Toàn cầu của Người sống với HIV (GNP+), Restless Development, Privacy International và Universidad de los Andes (Colombia), cũng như đại diện Nhóm Tư vấn Cộng đồng (CAT) từ mỗi quốc gia tham gia. Dự án được triển khai với sự hỗ trợ của Fundacion Karisma (Colombia), Mạng lưới Người sống với HIV của Ghana (NAP+ Ghana) và Mạng lưới Người sống với HIV của Việt Nam (VNP+). *Tương lai của Quyền con người trong Kỷ nguyên Kỹ thuật số* hướng tới việc tạo ra bằng chứng do cộng đồng dẫn dắt về sức khỏe kỹ thuật số và quyền của thanh niên sống với HIV và các nhóm dân số bị gạt ra ngoài lề xã hội, đồng thời chuyển hóa bằng chứng đó thành vận động chính sách ở cấp quốc gia và toàn cầu.

Cuộc đánh giá này, được thực hiện bởi Matahari Global Solutions từ tháng Hai đến tháng Tư năm 2026, áp dụng các tiêu chí OECD-DAC về tính phù hợp, tính nhất quán, hiệu quả, hiệu suất, tác động và tính bền vững để đánh giá thiết kế, quá trình triển khai và kết quả của dự án tại cả bốn quốc gia và ở cấp độ toàn cầu.

Kết quả đánh giá cho thấy DHRP có tính phù hợp cao, giải quyết một lĩnh vực vẫn còn thiếu sự quan tâm từ các chủ thể y tế toàn cầu chủ đạo – một khoảng trống được các đối tác tại Tổ chức Y tế Thế giới (WHO), Văn phòng Cao ủy Nhân quyền Liên Hợp Quốc (OHCHR) và Quỹ Toàn cầu phòng chống AIDS, Lao và Sốt rét ("Quỹ Toàn cầu") xác nhận độc lập. Mô hình T-PAR của dự án vừa là đặc điểm nổi bật nhất vừa là đóng góp quan trọng nhất: bằng cách tích hợp CAT vào mọi giai đoạn của quá trình nghiên cứu và quản trị dự án, DHRP đã tạo ra những phát hiện có tính xác thực rõ ràng và hình thành một nhóm các nhà vận động trẻ có ý định tiếp tục công việc này sau khi khoản tài trợ kết thúc. Tập đoàn DHRP cũng sẽ tiếp tục duy trì hoạt động.

Việc DHRP áp dụng T-PAR làm nền tảng phương pháp luận không phải là ngẫu nhiên đối với các kết quả đạt được mà là yếu tố cấu thành nên chúng: tính xác thực của các phát hiện nghiên cứu, tính chính đáng của hoạt động vận động, và sự gắn kết bền vững của thanh niên tại cả bốn quốc gia đều là kết quả trực tiếp của việc các cộng đồng được tích hợp vào quá trình nghiên cứu ngay từ đầu, thay vì chỉ được tham vấn ở phần ngoại vi.

Các tác động chính bao gồm việc xem xét đưa các sản phẩm đầu ra của DHRP vào Chiến lược Sức khỏe Kỹ thuật số Toàn cầu 2028-2033 của WHO và các khung chuẩn mực ở cấp Liên Hợp Quốc; các thành viên CAT làm chứng trước cơ quan lập pháp quốc gia tại Colombia; và những thay đổi ở cấp cộng đồng về nhận thức quyền kỹ thuật số tại cả bốn quốc gia. Khóa học trực tuyến đại chúng mở (MOOC) song ngữ Tây Ban Nha/Tiếng Anh về sức khỏe kỹ thuật số và quyền, được ra mắt trên Coursera vào tháng 12 năm 2025, là một tài sản tri thức lâu dài sẽ vẫn có thể tiếp cận sau khi dự án kết thúc. Đánh giá xác định việc phân bổ ngân sách không đủ tại tổ chức chủ trì, kinh phí dịch thuật như một hạng mục chi tiêu thường xuyên thiếu hụt, và sự không ổn định về nhân sự tại Ghana là những khoảng trống hiệu suất mang tính cấu trúc.

Tiến độ trong việc thu hút sự tham gia của các chính phủ quốc gia bị hạn chế tại Ghana bởi môi trường pháp lý thù địch đối với các cộng đồng LGBTQI+ và việc tái cơ cấu hành chính, và tại Việt Nam do nhu cầu về khung thời gian dài hơn để tạo ra thay đổi chính sách – những yếu tố nằm ngoài tầm kiểm soát của dự án. Cả ba kết quả dài hạn, được lên kế hoạch cho toàn bộ tập đoàn và do đó kéo dài vượt ra ngoài khung thời gian của giai đoạn được xem xét, đều đang trong tầm với. Các sản phẩm đầu ra của DHRP đã tiến triển theo các lộ trình dự kiến.

### Những phát hiện chính:

- Bằng chứng mạnh mẽ về sự tham gia có ý nghĩa và vai trò lãnh đạo của thanh niên và cộng đồng tại cả bốn quốc gia
- Bằng chứng mạnh mẽ về năng lực an toàn kỹ thuật số thực tiễn và khả năng ứng phó được xây dựng trong các thành viên CAT và các cộng đồng rộng lớn hơn
- Bằng chứng mạnh mẽ về việc chuyển hóa các khái niệm phức tạp về sức khỏe kỹ thuật số và quyền kỹ thuật số thành ngôn ngữ và thực hành của cộng đồng
- Những thách thức được ghi nhận khi một tổ chức học thuật quản lý một cách hành chính và công bằng một khoản tài trợ quốc tế lớn với các đối tác xã hội dân sự và đối tác ở Nam Bán cầu về tính linh hoạt và thích ứng
- Những cam kết mạnh mẽ hơn được ghi nhận từ WHO trong việc giải quyết quyền con người và bình đẳng giới trong quản trị kỹ thuật số
- Việc lồng ghép quy chuẩn quyền con người kỹ thuật số được ghi nhận trong hướng dẫn và tài trợ của Quỹ Toàn cầu
- Bằng chứng hạn chế về tác động chính sách ở cấp quốc gia, đặc biệt tại Ghana và Việt Nam, do những hạn chế ngữ cảnh bên ngoài

- Bằng chứng hạn chế về tính bền vững cơ cấu vượt ra ngoài năng lực cá nhân, trong bối cảnh tài trợ quốc tế đang thu hẹp

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## Introduction to the DHRP

### History

The Digital Health and Rights Project (DHRP) is the consortium that received a grant from Foundation Botnar to implement a project titled *The Future of Human Rights in the Digital Age*. This grant is the third sequential iteration of Fondation Botnar-funded<sup>2</sup> work to better understand the rights of young adults in digital spaces with regards to health in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). It is the fourth overall study initiated by the DHRP consortium, which describes itself as a “response to the rapid growth of new partnerships by global and national health agencies with big tech companies, to gather empirical evidence of the effects of the digital transformation on young adults living with HIV and young key populations in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and use this evidence to inform national and global health governance.”<sup>3</sup> The DHRP was founded in 2019, and has since conducted research in Bangladesh, Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, and Vietnam.

The DHRP project under review is a transnational participatory action research (T-PAR) and advocacy project conducted in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, and Vietnam, with a theory of change (TOC) that focuses on three key long-term outcomes:

- A. Participatory Action Research approaches are widespread in digital governance
- B. National governments, global health agencies and UN human rights mechanisms have taken action to strengthen and enforce rights protections in the use of data and technology, addressing issues and approaches identified by DHRP
- C. Meaningful and sustainable participation of young people in their diversity from LMICs in research, digital innovation and governance

The DHRP began in 2019 as the brainchild of Sara (Meg) Davis, then an anthropologist at the Global Health Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute; Allan Maleche of KELIN, a human rights NGO in Kenya; Mike Podmore of STOPAIDS, a health advocacy group in the UK; and Rico Gustav of the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), an international network of national and community-led networks. The project was initially unfunded, with all partners working as volunteers or using organizational core funding. From 2021, it was funded for two years by Fondation Botnar (Botnar 1).<sup>4</sup> Subsequently the project received funding from Open Society University Networks (OSUN) for two years, expanding the project’s geographic reach. A second grant from Fondation Botnar, hosted by KELIN, supported the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, Dr. Tlaleng Mofokeng (Botnar 2). In 2023, Fondation Botnar allocated additional funding to conduct T-PAR in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam, building on and elaborating the T-PAR approach.<sup>5</sup>

PAR has been described as a “research methodology which centres people with personal experience of the issue in the collective pursuit of increased wellbeing (human and planetary). It challenges the dominance of academic and scientific knowledge... recognising the knowledge of marginalised groups and communities and of multiple ‘ways of knowing’... PAR is value-based: it seeks to enable people who have been marginalised to drive the research process themselves. PAR establishes a group-based process which cycles between reflection, analysis and action.”<sup>6</sup> DHRP defines its T-PAR as follows:

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*“We argue that transnational PAR builds on collaborative engagements that study and address issues spanning national borders, and that engage in policy and decision-making in global governance spaces (such as UN or multilateral or multistakeholder platforms). Crucially, we believe that TPAR should*

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<sup>2</sup> Fondation Botnar. <https://www.fondationbotnar.org/>

<sup>3</sup> DHRP. About us. <http://digitalhealthandrights.com/digital-health-and-rights-project/>

<sup>4</sup> Javier Guerrero-C et al. (2024), Brave Global Spaces: Researching Digital Health and Human Rights through Transnational Participatory Action Research, *Journal of Responsible Technology* 20 (December 2024): 100097, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrt.2024.100097>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Howard, J. (2024) ‘Participatory Action Research’, Participatory Methods website.

<https://www.participatorymethods.org/methodology/participatory-action-research/>

The DHRP website and findings from this external evaluation illustrate how these “multiple ways of knowing” are referenced in the project’s governance, describing its consortium as “a group of social scientists, human rights lawyers, health advocates, rights advocates, and communities living with and affected by HIV”, and shares central points of PAR, namely the full participation in research for advocacy by “the people being studied” and understanding “lived experience as a form of expertise.”<sup>8</sup>

The DHRP period covered in this evaluation is from June 2023 through February 2026.

## Governance

The governance model of the DHRP aimed to provide a structure for participation and joint decision-making to reflect the T-PAR approach.

The consortium and this grant is governed by a Steering Committee made up of executives and directors of the team at the host institution (in this grant, University of Warwick; in an earlier grant, KELIN), as well as senior representatives from each of the grant recipients (for this grant, GNP+, KELIN, Privacy International, Restless Development, STOPAIDS and Universidad de los Andes), as well as elected representatives of each Community Advisory Team (CAT). The Steering Committee makes all decisions governing the project by consensus, and chair/vice-chair roles rotate among organisations every four to five months. The votes of all Steering Committee members are equal. The Steering Committee and working groups are governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among all the above; the grant is governed by a collaboration agreement with the University of Warwick.

The project conducted T-PAR in four countries, i.e. Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, and Vietnam. In each of the countries, the project established a CAT, i.e. K-CAT for Kenya, G-CAT for Ghana, C-CAT for Colombia, and V-CAT for Vietnam; and had a team of national researchers represented by a respective national institution. In Colombia, this was Universidad de los Andes, later joined by Fundación Karisma; in Ghana, the Ghana Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAP+)<sup>9</sup>; in Kenya, the Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN);<sup>10</sup> and the Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+). Each CAT took on responsibility to co-create research tools (based on a master protocol and tools) and feedback loops; validate research findings; shape advocacy agendas; i.e., exemplified youth leadership in practice.

The DHRP employed an Anti-Oppression Framework, developed through an initiative by consortium members STOPAIDS and GNP+ in 2022.<sup>11</sup> This action recognises the departure from traditional academic research, the power imbalances inherent in global health, the practicality of international collaboration across languages and time zones, as well as the development history of PAR, which has its roots in countering oppression of neocolonialism, education, and access to knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

GNP+, KELIN, STOPAIDS, and the current project lead have been involved in all four DHRP projects. BRAC University and Universidad de los Andes joined in 2021-22 with the OSUN grant, and while BRAC University departed with the end of OSUN funding, Universidad de los Andes continued their participation.

In 2022, Fondation Botnar invited DHRP to apply for a larger grant (ultimately, £5.3 million across three years). In the process, the Geneva Graduate Institute co-led drafting of the narrative and budget with GNP+, in close consultation with the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee identified the need for a youth leadership organisation and a digital rights group to support future work and conducted searches and interviews. As a result of this process, led by KELIN and STOPAIDS, Restless Development and Privacy International joined the consortium and Steering Committee in 2022, at invitation and with a formal vote by the Steering Committee, thereafter participating in every stage of the grant application and planning process from 2022 to date, with PI co-leading development of the advocacy strategy with STOPAIDS.

In 2023, DHRP was awarded the grant by Botnar and moved from being hosted at the Geneva Graduate Institute to University of Warwick. The Steering Committee member organisations signed a collaboration agreement with University of Warwick which affirmed the Steering Committee’s role in overseeing the project.

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<sup>7</sup> Javier Guerrero-C, Nomtika Mjwana, Sebastian Leon-Giraldo, Sara L.M. Davis, Brave global spaces: Researching digital health and human rights through transnational participatory action research, *Journal of Responsible Technology*, Volume 20, 2024, 100097, ISSN 2666-6596, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrt.2024.100097>.

<sup>8</sup> DHRP. About us. <http://digitalhealthandrights.com/digital-health-and-rights-project/>

<sup>9</sup> NAP+ Ghana. National Office Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/p/Nap-Ghana-National-Office-100068714885260/>. NAP+ participation did not continue through the end of the project under review. Work in Ghana was continued by a team of consultants.

<sup>10</sup> KELIN Kenya website. <https://www.kelinkeny.org/>

<sup>11</sup> STOPAIDS (2022). Anti-Oppression Framework. <https://stopaids.org.uk/our-work/anti-oppression-framework/>

<sup>12</sup> Wakeford, T; Sanchez Rodriguez, T (2018). Participatory action research: towards a more fruitful knowledge. University of Exeter. Preprint. <https://hdl.handle.net/10871/36994>

In 2025, the Steering Committee voted to approve the addition of Fundacion Karisma to the consortium. Civil society and communities co-founded the consortium and fully co-led the development of the funding applications, work plans, budgets and research questions since 2019.

## Theory of Change

Below is a screenshot of the Theory of Change (TOC) as depicted in a presentation from the beginning of the grant.<sup>13</sup>

### FUTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS THEORY OF CHANGE

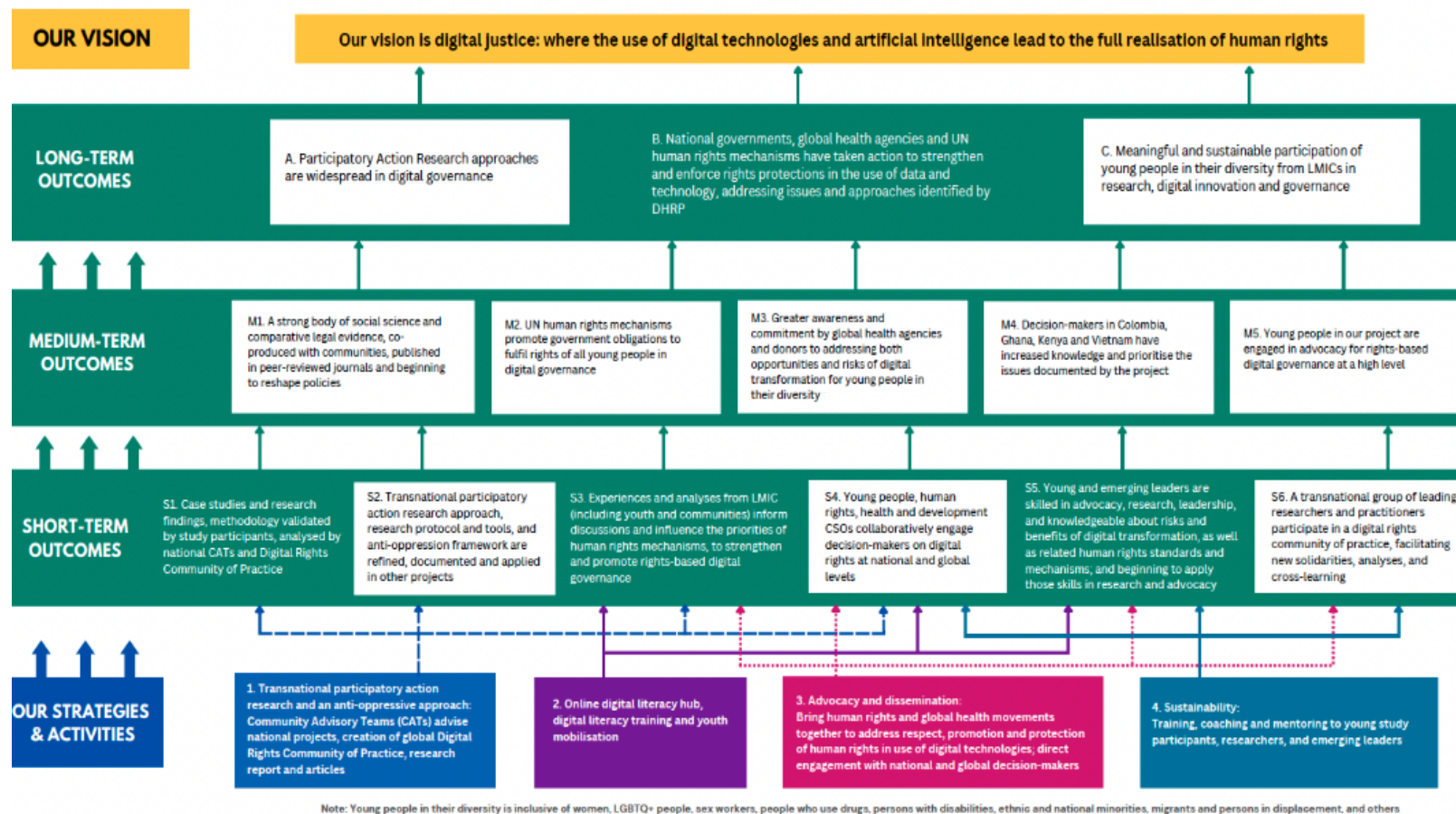


Figure 1: DHRP 2023-2026 Theory of Change

<sup>13</sup> Presentation on file with authors.

## Methodology

### Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criterion	Evaluation Question(s)*	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Analysis
Relevance	To what extent did the intervention address priority needs?	Project documents, including theory of change and MEL reports	Desk review, interviews	Thematic analysis
Coherence	To what extent is the intervention compatible with other interventions in the same context?	Project documents and interview transcripts	Desk review, interviews	Thematic analysis
Effectiveness	Were intended outcomes achieved?	M&E data and Theory of Change	Desk review, interviews	Descriptive analysis
Efficiency	Were resources used optimally?	Project documents and interview transcripts	In-depth interviews, FGDs, MSC narratives.	Thematic analysis
Impact	What broader changes occurred?	Project documents and interview transcripts	In-depth interviews, FGDs, MSC narratives, and triangulation with project documents. Quantitative data mining from selected participants.	Thematic analysis. Excel analysis with quantitative data, such as on social media impressions. Geospatial analysis will be used where locations logged for training.
Sustainability	Are results likely to continue?	Interview transcripts	In-depth interviews, FGDs, MSC narratives.	Longitudinal process-impact timeline integrating activities, capacity gains, outputs, and observed outcomes to assess institutionalisation, ownership, and durability of results.

### Purpose and Process of Evaluation

Matahari Global Solutions was hired by Warwick University to conduct an independent endline evaluation of the DHRP. Under review is the grant period from June 2023 through February 2026 (i.e., Botnar 3, which concluded in May 2026). The evaluation adopted a mixed-method participatory design grounded in OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and human-rights-based approaches, utilising qualitative analysis to generate actionable recommendations for future digital health and health rights programs as well as PAR interventions. Therefore, this evaluation report focuses less on verification of outputs and rather on what the program achieved, and what that means for young adults living with and affected by HIV, as well as T-PAR as a research and advocacy tool.

The Matahari team has drafted three separate questionnaires based on OECD criteria for the three categories of interviewees and types of interviews: key informant interviews with internal/implementers, focus group discussions with community advisory teams (CATs), and key informant interviews with external actors (such as the Global Fund or the United Nations). These questionnaires received feedback from six (6) townhalls with consortium and CAT members: three townhalls in Spanish, two townhalls in English, one townhall in Vietnamese. Feedback from the townhalls was systematically reviewed and incorporated into the questionnaire through thematic tracking, including issues of wording clarity, OECD-DAC alignment, participatory research dimensions, and contextual relevance.

Townhall

Facilitator

Date of Townhall

Attendees

English language townhall #1	Fifa A Rahman	23 February 2026, 14:00 GMT	Abhijit Njarattil Parameswaran (GNP+), Trang Pham (VNP+)
Spanish language townhall #1	Pedro Villardi	23 February 2026, 18:00 GMT	Sebastián Girardo (Uniandes) and Juli Salamanca Cortés (Uniandes)
Spanish language townhall #2	Pedro Villardi	24 February 2026, 18:00 GMT	Magda Meneses, Desirée Santiago and Camilo Restrepo (CATs), and Denise (CODS)
English language townhall #2	Gisa Dang	25 February 2026, 10:00 GMT	Juliet Nakazibwe (Restless Development), Dennis Mwesigwa (Restless Development), Richard Agodzo (Ghana Youth Coordinator)
Vietnamese language townhall	Tùng Doan	25 February 2026	10 participants from VNP+, VCAT, and CBOs
Spanish language townhall #3	Pedro Villardi	25 February 2026 18:00 GMT	Mauricio Alberto Cortes Cely (CODS), Catalina Gonzales Uribe (CODS/Uniandes) and Natalia Andrade (Karisma)

In total, the evaluation team conducted 19 key informant interviews (KII); two group interviews and two focus group discussions (FGD) using the questionnaire; and three Most Significant Change conversations. Out of the KII, 15 were with consortium and CAT members; four with external stakeholders. The FGD and group interviews were with CAT and consortium members. The sampling rationale included considerations of how the potential interviewees corresponded with the TOC, the OECD-DAC criteria, the DHRP governance model, i.e., ensuring to include at least one person from each working group as well as the Steering Committee and all CAT and country stakeholders.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed with Otter.ai with manual checks for accuracy. The report was written by two consultants with input from the consulting team. It was shared in draft form with the PI and project coordinator at Warwick, then with the full consortium for written feedback and triangulation. The consultants presented the evaluation results in a virtual meeting, before incorporating feedback and submitting the final written report.

## **Approach to Most-Significant-Change Methodology**

Most-Significant-Change Methodology is a qualitative approach to outcome harvesting that focuses on the results as described by program participants, with limited prompts that allow for expression of personal experiences of individuals to become part of a group representation of change. In the full application of this methodology, participants write their own stories of change, share them in a group setting, and through discussion arrive at stories that all agree on as most significant.<sup>14</sup> The evaluation team suggested including a MSC component to continue the DHRP focus on participatory approaches and to incorporate participant-driven narratives to highlight the impact of the PAR approach. The main limiting factor in the MSC exercise was time. The external evaluation occurred over the course of the last two months of the DHRP when all CATs and consortium members were still implementing DHRP advocacy activities and focused on project deliverables. MSC in its ideal format requires that participants have time to share all stories of change and discuss them in detail to arrive at a joint conclusion, i.e. validation of the outcome harvesting.

Understanding the time constraints, the evaluation team suggested three options to the CATs for their consideration, which were:

### **Option 1: Participatory MSC (Recommended if time allows)**

- Participants prepare short written reflections in advance (1–2 pages in response to prompts).
- A 90–120-minute group session is held where participants share stories and collectively select or rank the most significant change.
- Strongest participatory ownership and reflection. Can be expanded to more than one meeting if you request.

### **Option 2: Guided Group Reflection (Moderate Time Commitment)**

- No prior written essays required. Participants receive the same prompts as above for reflection in advance of meeting.
- 90 minute facilitated group session.
- Participants share stories verbally and jointly identify the top one to three significant changes.
- Still participatory but lighter preparation.

### **Option 3: Light MSC (Minimal Time)**

- Stories collected during interviews/FGDs.
- The evaluation team synthesizes and presents 3–4 shortlisted stories during the validation meeting for discussion.
- Least time-intensive for your team.

The evaluation team offered MSC to all four CATs, however, no CAT was able to allocate dedicated time for the process. Instead, the evaluation team worked with Restless Development in Uganda to set up one MSC meeting of 60 minutes for four members of the V-CAT, G-CAT and K-CAT three different CATs, who each wrote a submission that was shared in slide compilation alongside basic discussion questions. Restless Development staff also participated in their own MSC meeting, which included an additional question on organisational-level change.

The questions for the written reflections were the below question, with suggested writing prompts for those wanting additional guidance on what to write about:

1. During your participation in DHRP, what was the most significant change that you experienced personally?
  - *Describe the change.*
  - *How has it changed your practice?*
  - *How has it changed in your thoughts of beliefs?*
  - *Why is this change significant to you?*
2. In your view, what was the most significant change that Restless Development experienced on an organizational level due to participation in DHRP? *(For Restless Development staff only)*
3. In your view, what has been the most significant change for your community/the community you serve, as a result of the DHRP?
  - *Describe the change, with examples if you can.*
  - *How do you know that the DHRP is responsible for this change?*
  - *Why is this change significant?*

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on MSC see for example: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/most-significant-change> or <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/most-significant-change>

## Limitations

There were several key limitations as follows:

- **Timing of evaluation** - the evaluation timeline was parallel to the last two months of project implementation, resulting in scheduling conflicts, rushed interviews, and inability to conduct interviews that may have shown a fuller picture.
- **Evaluation budget** - The budget allocated for this evaluation was limited vis-à-vis the amount of data available that could have been collected and analysed for a program of this length and magnitude.<sup>15</sup>
- **Condensed timeline** - We had condensed timeline due to delayed start date: bureaucratic contracting delays on the side of the University of Warwick delayed the start date by 5 weeks. These delays were not compensated by an equivalent extension to the final report submission deadline.
- **Inability to conduct site visits** due to delayed start date, conflicting commitments, and project implementer availability because project implementation was ongoing during evaluation.
- **No national policymakers as key informants.** The interviews did not include national policymakers as external stakeholders.

What remains unknown:

- Available evidence is limited to mainly outcome harvesting and did not include verification of internal output reporting against MEL framework indicators.
- Impact and Sustainability sections are indications of trends and apparent changes as experienced by DHRP participants.
- MSC participation was limited and results are therefore used primarily as an illustrative method to share additional insights based on young people's experience in the DHRP. While the evaluation team has looked for corresponding themes between MSC information, KII, and FGD, the MSC stories are not considered a directly comparable analytic strand.

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<sup>15</sup> For descriptions of budgeting for evaluations, see e.g. [https://www.memphis.edu/crep/pdfs/resources/sif\\_evaluation\\_budgeting\\_quick\\_guide.pdf](https://www.memphis.edu/crep/pdfs/resources/sif_evaluation_budgeting_quick_guide.pdf); or <https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/managers-guide-evaluation/scope-evaluation/identify-what-resources-are-available-for-evaluation-what-will-be-needed>

## Results and Findings based on OECD-DAC Criteria

OECD-DAC is an internationally recognised evaluative framework that enables systematic assessment of complex, multi-country interventions. Given the DHRP's multi-country multi-partner consortium operating across diverse political and cultural contexts, the OECD-DAC criteria were selected for their capacity to structure comparative analysis without minimising country-specific insights. Our analysis based on these criteria render deep insights, but we note that the evidence emerging is not equally strong across all criteria. It is our assessment that insights gathered *are strongest on relevance, coherence, and some aspects of effectiveness at personal and community levels, while evidence is more limited or mixed on structural impact, policy uptake, and sustainability.*

### Relevance

Key evaluation questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ To what extent did the intervention address priority needs?</li><li>■ When you began in this project, what did you know about digital health and rights in your context?</li><li>■ How would you describe the primary needs the DHRP sought to address at inception?</li><li>■ How did contextual changes (political, digital governance, funding, civic space) influence the continued relevance of the project?</li></ul>
Summary of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The DHRP demonstrates strong, sustained, and growing relevance, illustrated by the growth of AI, continuing violence/abuse/stigma faced by communities, polycrises, and cuts in foreign aid and donor funding.</li><li>■ External partners emphasised the underserved nature of digital health and rights and the value add of the DHRP to them in terms of generating necessary qualitative insights.</li><li>■ A T-PAR approach as highly relevant and should be conducted/adopted more frequently as an approach in future studies, however, should embed flexibility in approval processes to prevent high complexity and burden of work in approval processes.</li><li>■ The focus on structurally excluded young people was considered highly relevant given both digital technology use and likelihood of receiving abuse and privacy breaches.</li></ul>

The OECD-DAC criterion Relevance means “The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.”<sup>16</sup> This project is the third iteration of a digital health and rights project focused on young people, and based on the following testimonials, the project has been strongly relevant and has continuing and growing relevance.

#### Sustained and growing relevance — the field gap is expanding not closing

Mike Podmore, Executive Director of STOPAIDS and who together with Meg Davis and Allan Maleche initiated the idea for a project around digital health and rights, explained why they at the time believed the project was necessary:

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*“The Global Fund was starting to create partnerships with Google and other digital tech companies. Those partnerships were being made and there wasn't a huge amount of clarity about what they were really achieving, what the potential role of civil society and communities would be, and how those partnerships were going to affect and impact on the human rights of civil society and communities.”*

*(Mike Podmore, Executive Director of STOPAIDS, interviewed 20 March 2026)*

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These conversations occurred prior to the first grant from Fondation Botnar on digital health and rights in 2019. Reflecting on the trajectory of the three projects through to the third iteration of the project subject to evaluation in this report (and alongside the growth of artificial intelligence (AI), Mike reiterated how the relevance was not only sustained, but had grown:

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*“The need for the work is definitely there and ever expanding. We have had a particular stronger focus on human rights, gender equality and participation of communities affected by health conditions in a*

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<sup>16</sup> OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second Edition), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es>.

way that even other civil society groups working on this have not. The need for continued work in this regard is really, really strong."

(Mike Podmore, Executive Director of STOPAIDS, interviewed 20 March 2026)

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The DHRP Principal Investigator's testimonial corroborates this – that despite ongoing polycrises, communities consider digital health and rights consistently relevant:

"I am continually surprised by how relevant this topic is, because every time we see some huge catastrophe – like most recently the Trump and Musk-led funding cuts, the wars in different places, criminalisation, crackdowns on civil society – every time I think young people are going to tell us this is not their topic priority. But then we go and talk to them, actually it is important and it is absolutely a priority. And the feedback we get is consistently: why is nobody else asking us this?"

(Meg Davis, Principal Investigator, DHRP, interviewed 19 March 2026)

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In addition to communities wondering why there were no enquiries about digital health and rights, some communities were unaware of rights they were entitled to, illustrating why the project was much needed and indeed was relevant:

"Many people in the community were not even aware that they had the right to protection... many thought that because they were living with HIV, they simply had to accept that – they could not ask for more."

(Phong, V-CAT member from the southern network / Ho Chi Minh region, interviewed 2 March 2026)

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### Focus on marginalised young people as a distinctive and justified orientation

The relevance of a focus on young people and particularly those who are structurally excluded due to societal stigma and discriminatory policies, was evident throughout interviews. These young people are frequent users of digital technologies for health and face numerous challenges including stigma, abuse, privacy breaches, and other concerns, as Solomon from the G-CAT illustrates:

"A single act of seeking digital health information could often place people at the risk of being exposed, of being harassed, of being blackmailed. There were several participants who shared a lot of these stories through the research."

(Solomon, G-CAT, FGD conducted 19 March 2026)

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DHRP implementers and CATs were cognisant of the youth focus throughout:

"The project was particular to young people... it even went further to categorize young people – persons living with HIV, female sex workers, and men who have sex with men. So, it had a specific angle of the marginalised. It was looking at health, technology, and then the ethical issues – what are the human rights issues coming up from the use of digital health technology?"

(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)

"This was the first project I managed that explicitly focused on digital transformation in health, particularly around young people's experiences accessing information online, and it sparked a deep curiosity in me to learn more, engage in stakeholder discussions, and participate in webinars and trainings so I could confidently contribute my own insights alongside those of other young people. It has changed my practice by making me more intentional and critical in how I engage with digital health tools, always considering data safety, accessibility for marginalised communities, and the broader

*human rights implications, including how context, language, and culture shape these tools. It has also shifted my beliefs, as I now view digital health innovations through a human rights lens and feel a strong responsibility to advocate for safe, inclusive platforms where communities can voice their needs and concerns."*

*(Written submission to second MSC meeting on 19 March 2026)*

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This was consistent with interviews from Colombia:

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*"The focus was very strongly on youth. We weren't looking at children, we weren't necessarily thinking about older adults. We wanted to know how young people in these four countries who used and consumed social media and who accessed large amounts of information – what was their experience like?"*

*(Catalina Gonzalez-Uribe, Principal Investigator for UniAndes, interviewed 18 March 2025)*

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This focus also translated through to external stakeholders such as the Global Fund:

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*"Technology facilitated sexual and gender-based violence is something that is in some of the reports DHRP put together, particularly in the youth report. When we think about GBV programming, both in terms of prevention and response, making sure that there was a digital lens to that has been something that came out of many of (our) discussions (with the DHRP)."*

*(Alistair Shaw, Human Rights Advisor, Community, Rights, and Gender Department, Global Fund, interviewed 16 March 2026)*

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#### External validation of the field as underserved and under-partnered

External partners pointed out how digital health and rights was a neglected area, with insufficient partnerships, and emphasised how unique the DHRP is/was in addressing the gaps in knowledge and in partnerships. Notably, the WHO Unit Head for Digital Health Capacity Building and Collaboration stated that the DHRP was 'the only program' WHO has worked with to assess the uptake of digital health and rights:

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*"This is a neglected area. It's not well saturated in terms of partnerships, as other dimensions of digital health like interoperability... The issue around equity, gender and rights is an area that has not been as well saturated. This particular program, to my knowledge, is the only program we have worked with to really assess the uptake on digital health rights."*

*(Derrick Muneene, Unit Head, Digital Health Capacity Building and Collaboration, WHO, interviewed 16th March 2026)*

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An anonymous OHCHR official stated that the project was unique in addressing digital health, human rights and health, and provided a value add to OHCHR on qualitative research:

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*"There are not many that have this distinct approach on digital health, human rights and health. We are resource constrained – we wouldn't be able to do the scientific assessment and the qualitative work in that way. So for us, it's a conditio sine qua non to have applied research partners, and such are also very rare."*

*(Anonymous official from OHCHR, interviewed 6 March 2026)*

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These testimonials illustrate the relevance of the DHRP and its specific approaches to providing necessary qualitative insights to UN mechanisms and processes.

### Evolving global health landscape as catalyst for digitalisation

Several interviewees spoke about the cuts to foreign aid and the impact on use of digital technologies, notably that given constrained resources, there was greater emphasis to find efficiencies through digitisation and the use of AI, and a danger of sacrificing rights for financial gain:

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*"(The) conversation on public health is shifting right now, it is shifting away from a single disease focus, or focusing on diseases in silos, towards integration. There are big conversations around integration. There are conversations around use of digital technology and rolling that out, there are now concerns and things are alive in terms of countries entering into bilateral agreements with the US while bypassing the global regulatory systems (such as) WHO or frameworks that have already been agreed upon. And then we have situations where some of those bilateral agreements contain very poorly drafted provisions that would not guarantee safeguarding of data and protection and aspects like that. And then you have countries like Kenya which are desperate to get the funding, because they have got no other place to get the funding for HIV. So irrespective of some of the things that are put there, they are then ending up agreeing to things that may either be detrimental or not even following the procedures that are required to cross check what they are signing up."*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

*" The use of digital technology and tools has only increased, and now with the development of AI, there has been even faster expansion and fears related to this area have also expanded exponentially. Given the nature of the ODA cuts and the desire to find greater efficiencies and cheaper ways of doing things, that also turbo boosts the uptake of these types of tools to sort of hopefully find cost efficiencies. So the need for the work is definitely there and ever expanding."*

*(Mike Podmore, Executive Director of STOPAIDS, interviewed 20 March 2026)*

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These statements illustrate that relevance of DHRP, and principles and approaches therein are increasingly relevant due to shifts in foreign aid.

### Participatory design as both strength and constraint

While the transnational participatory design was lauded by most implementers and CATs as being a necessary component for the level of contextualisation and community leadership that resulted. Camila Gil, from the Colombia CAT, for example told us that the T-PAR approach should be adopted more universally in the future:

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*"This project had (inclusion) and focused on it – on ensuring a great deal of participation, not only from the community advisory team members, but also from the people who were interviewed. So hopefully almost all research projects in the world, regardless of their scope, will eventually adopt this kind of participatory approach"*

*(Camila Gil, representative of the Colombia CAT, interviewed 17 March 2026)*

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Juliet Nakazibwe, Head of Global Programmes at Restless Development, whose main responsibilities were to support CAT in-person meetings, co-chair the communications working group, deliver one youth digital campaign, and participating in global and regional advocacy,<sup>17</sup> told us that the trade-off of a T-PAR approach was increased complexity in processes:

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*"What comes up for me is a reflection on the participatory approach that we signed up to in this consortium. There are quite a lot of advantages to that approach, but also a bit of limitations. The participatory approach has created an environment where everybody is involved in a lot of processes. We have different working groups on different thematic areas, but we also have management meetings where different discussions and things that need decision making end up from the working group. Then we have the whole consortium meetings. You have the steering committee. The participatory approach makes or helps everyone to feel that they belong, and they are part of the process fully. But you know, it*

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<sup>17</sup> Restless Development (2025) Botnar III MEL Reporting Template 1st June 2024 – May 2025

can also be seen or interpreted to be very hierarchical, especially in situations where it's not very flexible. My experience has been what I don't want to call negative, but the downside of it is where I found a participatory approach to be very, very complex (and time-consuming) ... A practical example (is when) a document comes from the digital empowerment group and you're in a comms working group and you're expected to sign off that document and as an organization, you do not have any representative in that group. (There was) a bit of overload there... What we've learned a lot (is that) for participatory approaches to really work well, there is need for some level of flexibility on processes so that it doesn't end up being very demanding."

*(Juliet Nakazibwe, Head of Global Programmes, Restless Development, FGD conducted 19 March 2026)*

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While this does not diminish the value of a T-PAR approach in terms of increasing community leadership and ensuring highly contextualised research findings and advocacy, this suggests that T-PAR approaches should ensure flexibility in processes.

## Coherence

Key evaluation questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are the different components of the intervention consistent with each other and working together towards the same objectives?</li> <li>To what extent is the intervention consistent with and complementary to other interventions by other actors working in the same space?</li> <li>How did you make sure that your work and priorities were coherent with University of Warwick's and the DHRP project? [External Partners]</li> </ul>
Summary of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were some weaknesses in internal coherence, with CATs stating that capacity building may have been stronger if conducted prior to research commencing, and tensions about research and advocacy sequencing for maximum effectiveness.</li> <li>There was strong external coherence, enhanced by the position of implementer staff on Global Fund governance mechanisms, and through various formal and informal engagements with external actors, including OCHCR and WHO, via the co-curation of events and joint review of papers.</li> <li>Establishing the Anti-Oppression Framework at the beginning enabled greater coherence and accountability when power asymmetry occurred, however did not prevent power asymmetry from occurring</li> <li>Internal coherence may have been improved with more regular review of procedures and decisions outlined in the consortium MOU and stringent application of the AOF with University of Warwick branding team to ameliorate impressions of institutionalism, and with increased consultation and flexibility built in at the beginning of the project, including engaging local government actors, connecting CATs earlier, and ensuring additional flexibility for workplan amendments pursuant to CAT feedback.</li> </ul>

This section sought to assess whether the project was both internally and externally coherent, i.e. whether the various components of the project are compatible with each other and mutually reinforcing (**internally coherent**) and whether the project and interventions therein are compatible with other interventions in the same context, and with the broader policy environment (**externally coherent**).

Coherence of objectives and activities was designed to occur internally via a governance structure that included all key implementers and community advisory teams from each country. This structure is displayed in Figure 2 below.

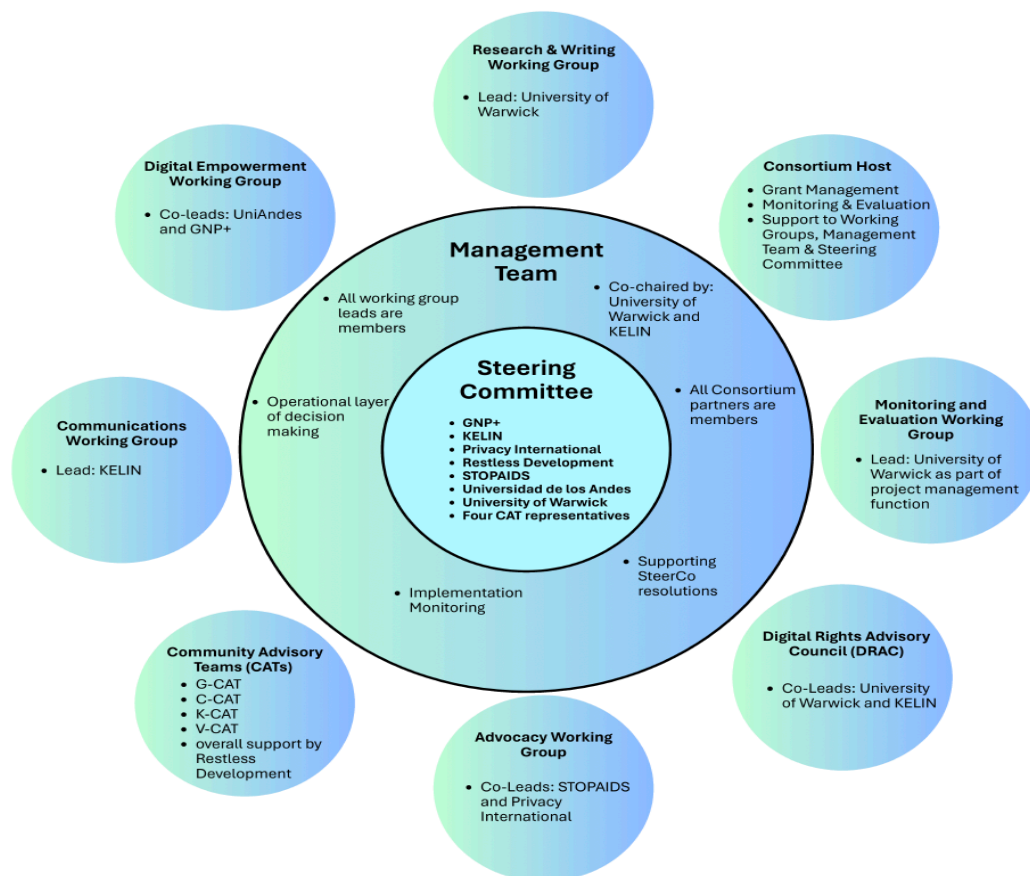


Figure 2: Governance structure of the Digital Health and Rights Project

External coherence was sought through a variety of different channels and fora, including international conferences where either members of the consortium or CATs presented, through bilateral engagement of different consortium members with external actors such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Global Fund. These engagements included formal and informal engagements - however did not seem to be guided by a single strategic document mapping external engagements. Despite this, engagements were largely internally coherent/moderately internally coherent, as demonstrated in the below analysis.

Thematic findings on both internal and external coherence are as follows:

#### Coherence between DHRP's approach and the mandate of global bodies

Interventions were broadly coherent with the mandate and priorities of key global actors who the DHRP selected as advocacy targets, including the WHO, OHCHR, and the Global Fund, though different modalities of engagement were planned for each, which reflect the difference in engagement opportunities during the three-year timeline of the DHRP

DHRP engagement with the WHO was successful and resulted in collaboration with the WHO to contextualise and rightsize progress on the WHO Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2027, deployed under the WHO Global Initiative on Digital Health. Notably, the WHO invited the University of Warwick to speak on panels, attended DHRP webinars, co-organised sessions at the World Health Summit, and conducted through the joint review of papers. According to Derrick Muneene, Unit Head, Digital Health Capacity Building and Collaboration:

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*"The paper that [WHO] produced, we shared that with [unclear] and that's how the Regional Office for Southeast Asia (WHO SEARO) picked up the work. All of these (panels, webinars, co-organised sessions, and joint review of papers) were the methods we undertook not only to ensure coherence and that the messaging is aligned, but also to ensure that we shed light on this particular topic."*

*(Derrick Muneene, Unit Head, Digital Health Capacity Building and Collaboration, WHO, interviewed 16th March 2026)*

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An anonymous representative from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights spoke of the 'complete match' in priorities between the DHRP and the OHCHR:

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*"For us, collaborating with the digital health and rights project is crucial because of the first-hand information, i.e., empirical, as well as qualitative data from their projects, and the tools they have developed such as the checklist, which are all in line with our rights-based approaches. Substantively there is a complete match."*

*(Anonymous Official from OHCHR, interviewed 6 March 2026)*

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Global Fund's engagement differed slightly from the above two organisations due to the difference in mandate. As Alistair Shaw, Human Rights Advisor, Community, Rights and Gender Department described:

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*"We don't develop normative guidance ourselves. We follow guidance that exists from our technical partners. Our added value is that we are funding defined programs to remove human rights-related barriers to health services... so what we tried to do was to have discussions internally based on the conversations I was having with DHRP colleagues on how we can then tailor and adapt our internal tools, or the way we're framing these programs, to better consider digital rights."*

*(Alistair Shaw, Human Rights Advisor, Community, Rights, and Gender Department, Global Fund, interviewed 16 March 2026)*

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The Community, Rights and Gender Department of the Global Fund reported engaging with the DHRP predominantly through the STOPAIDS representative that sat on a Global Fund Committee, and this dual role that a DHRP consortium member and separately as a Member on a Global Fund governance body, allowed for, as Shaw described "a lot of discussions to make it into our governance mechanisms and into the Secretariat - which is an advantage."

### Alignment with external institutional partners through both informal and structured mechanisms

Coherence with the mandates and priorities of external partners such as the Global Fund, OHCHR, and WHO occurred through both formal and informal mechanisms throughout the project. An example of formal engagements was with WHO, described below:

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*"We invited Warwick University to panels during the Global Initiative on Digital Health. They organised their own webinars which they invited us to. At the UN level through WSIS we co-conducted topics. The method of coherence was through webinars, through joint reviews of papers."*

*(Derrick Muneene, Unit Head, Digital Health Capacity Building and Collaboration, WHO, interviewed 16th March 2026)*

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Various DHRP implementers also had positions on Global Fund organs, such as the governing board or on CCM structures. This enabled external coherence to be achieved both through formal interventions on these bodies and through informal engagements while attending these meetings:

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*"Someone from STOPAIDS has a seat on our governance body. That also allowed for a lot of discussions to make it into our governance mechanisms and into the Secretariat – which is an advantage."*

*(Alistair Shaw, Human Rights Advisor, Community, Rights and Gender Department, interviewed 16 March 2026)*

*"Some V-CAT members participate in national mechanisms such as the CCM... they brought content on digital health, stigma, and discrimination into meetings and community dialogues."*

*(Phong, V-CAT member from the southern network / Ho Chi Minh region, interviewed 2 March 2026)*

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External coherence was therefore enhanced by the position of implementers on Global Fund governance mechanisms, and through various formal and informal engagements with external actors such as OHCHR and WHO.

### Internal coherence of project sequencing

Implementers overall valued that advocacy for this grant period expanded after or during research activities. In Kenya, the lead implementing organisation, KELIN, found the sequencing of research then advocacy useful, and that research strengthened the advocacy approaches.

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*"Advocacy did not start immediately after the end of the project, but (rather) way earlier... the complementarity was that once the research was concluded, we had the report – and now this was able to revamp or strengthen the advocacy messaging going forward."*

*(Timothy Wafula, Programme Manager, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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Implementers in Ghana also valued the clear articulation of responsibilities, and stated 'at the consortium level' things went well, including:

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*"How everything was broken down, setting up different work groups so that each work group is focused on specific areas. For instance, we have the research and writing working group that was solely focused on the research, and then we have the advocacy (working group), and then where the two groups have to come together (and collaborate) because they need the findings (from the research), and then we also need their voice for advocacy. That collaboration was massive."*

*(Alberta Nadutey, Researcher for Ghana, interviewed 17 March 2026)*

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While all new work streams started at the same time, and advocacy was continuing from the previous grant period, based on the interviews there were some challenges in aligning existing advocacy practice with the findings emerging from the new T-PAR conducted during the period under review. Privacy International, co-lead of the Advocacy Working Group, reflected on the practicality of sequencing some reflections:

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*"From the first month of working on the project, there was expectation that we would do human rights advocacy, but we felt that there was hesitation to undertake in-depth long-term advocacy prior to identification of key areas of concerns that would emerge from the new research. So there was this strange loop within the first year whether we could develop advocacy activities based on our own organisational expertise and knowledge to respond to ongoing advocacy opportunities, whilst also making space for priorities that would emerge from the research later on in the project. As we were not involved in the research stream of the project, it felt like we were hanging on in year one before we could actually be very active."*

*(Alexandrine Pirlot de Corbion, Director of Strategy, Privacy International, interviewed 20 March 2026)*

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Pirlot de Corbion further stated that "if the findings of the research were going to be the basis for the work, then that should have been built into the design", pointing to inconsistency in internal coherence on sequencing of activities. The co-leads of the advocacy working group reflected in their interview about the cohesion between trying to develop an advocacy strategy that would be cohesive and effective on the international and national levels as well as grounded in the research results and addressing priorities for the young people involved in the DHRP. Without knowing the policy recommendations around which to build the advocacy strategy, operationalising foundations for national and international advocacy can be challenging. As this report addresses in the effectiveness and impact sections, policy advocacy requires targeted efforts over time.

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*"Advocacy was started on this wider issue of human rights and new technologies and their effect on the right to health and their involvement in health. But then the research in a way exposed some other issues which were slightly different, or slightly more nuanced, or a slightly different sector than some people even have expertise or worked in. So, we set out with an initial idea of what almost be the result of the research and then it turned into something different."*

*(Sarah Simms, Privacy International, co-lead DHRP advocacy working group, interviewed 9 March 2026).*

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Simms explained that a new focus emerged based on the research findings, where technology-facilitated abuse moved into the forefront, which represented a new domain for many partners and their expertise. Given the time at which this priority emerged, developing an in-depth advocacy strategy in the last year of the grant presented a challenge. Molly Pugh Jones, co-lead of the advocacy working group, suggested that the challenge with cohesion is likely related to the many unknowns around digital health and human rights.

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*"As our knowledge has grown and as we've expanded capacity in the four countries, there's different areas that people want to work on through different avenues. If there was a next iteration of the project, it would be my preferred advocacy like angle to have an overarching goal, but kind of do what we've done where we've had much more specific goals at a national level, and to align our global advocacy with that. So that might look like choosing tech-facilitated abuse as the key thing that connects our work, I think advocacy is more effective with that focus. But that's my personal perspective, and I think there's different opinions within this project, around, the flow of advocacy."*

*(Molly Pugh Jones, STOPAIDS, co-lead DHRP advocacy working group, interviewed 9 March 2026)*

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As described in the relevance section, digitalisation in health has been expanding rapidly with still insufficient understanding of digital rights. In these circumstances, T-PAR can surface a variety of issues of concern which may mean that with growing knowledge, new advocacy goals may need to be defined or existing ones refined, pointing to the requirement of flexibility:

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*"I think a challenge rather than a failure is how nebulous digital rights are and how many cross-cutting sectors we've tried to tackle. I think that we tried to do a lot of different things, and I think, as Sarah said, that put different pressures on different areas of our work. And I think if I did this again, I would maybe zoom in a bit more on specific issues, rather than kind of digital rights more broadly,"*

*(Molly Pugh Jones, Advocacy Manager, STOPAIDS, interviewed 9 March 2026)*

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These findings suggest that this is an area that could benefit from further review to surface additional lessons learned on process and sequencing to the benefit of future T-PAR with a large consortium and an ambitious work plan like the DHRP.<sup>18</sup>

There were more concerns vis-a-vis the sequencing of civil society actors and communities adept in domestic advocacy. In Colombia, the UniAndes researcher expressed that an earlier inclusion of Fundación Karisma would have been beneficial, whose onboarding was in part delayed due to the timeline issue with subgrant agreements:

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*"One promises and commits to many things in an order in which the community is not yet connected... The agreement with Karisma came very late."*

*(Catalina Gonzales-Uribe, Principal Investigator for UniAndes, interviewed 17 March 2026)*

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The coordinator and Steering Committee representative of the K-CAT expressed that in hindsight, more in-depth capacity building on digital health and rights should have occurred prior to the research commencing. In her own words:

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*"I wish the capacity building (had) started before the research because... during the training, all of us were just like, I wish we knew this information before the research started... I remember some of the CATs mentioning that they would have loved to have that training at the inception, at the beginning of the project, it would have brought a lot of perspective."*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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Similar sentiments were expressed in Vietnam, where conducting efforts to strengthen the community networks through capacity building earlier in the project sequence was suggested. In one extract from a focus group discussion with the V-CAT:

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*"The project moved from tool-building to data collection, to policy advocacy, but in Vietnam the network was still not strong enough in digital health spaces to bring the findings to higher-level stakeholders as effectively as hoped."*

*(V-CAT Chair (P4\_NAT), Vietnam FGD conducted 2 March 2026)*

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Based on these reflections, the project would have benefited from even more early engagement of local civil society and community actors, and more importantly that capacity building on digital health and rights would have begun prior to research commencing.

### Attribution and identity distribution

One external stakeholder expressed that it wasn't always clear when he was engaging with the DHRP versus individual member organisations. As such, there may be broader questions around attribution and whether impact is being tied back to the project. In his own words:

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Molly Pugh Jones, STOPAIDS and Sarah Simms, Privacy International, coordinators of advocacy working group, 9 March 2026.

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*"I engage with specific people that I know. At different times, I'm unclear whether I'm working with (organisations) as DHRP or as their own organisation."*

*(Alistair Shaw, Human Rights Advisor, Community, Rights, and Gender Department, Global Fund, interviewed 16 March 2026)*

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This is a one-off excerpt but illustrates how there may have been insufficient coherence vis-a-vis identity and attribution to the project when engaging with external actors.

### Consortium governance and power asymmetry

Mentioned elsewhere in this evaluation report is the Anti-Oppression Framework (AOF), which is built around the values of humility, shifting power, solidarity, and co-ownership,<sup>19</sup> including positioning oneself shoulder-to-shoulder with individuals and organisations and co-creating work rather than positioning oneself in a leadership position and exploiting others. As discussed [below](#), the AOF was repeatedly referred to throughout the project.

One of the approaches used to enhance coherence and reduce power asymmetry was to ensure young people were embedded in the steering committee. In the words of Allan Maleche from KELIN:

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*"Given that this was a huge grant, we needed to ensure that there's good governance in terms of ensuring there are working groups that track the work that needs to be done, the organizations or the leaders organizations are able to see it, but also that the communities you're working with, who are young people, are embedded in the steering committee, so that they are then involved and see how decisions are being taken, voice their concerns and be able to participate. So the participatory approach that happened, both in the research and happened in the setup of the governance aspect, was to ensure that everyone gets a chance to be represented and share their voice, (and) be part of the ultimate committee that makes the decisions on behalf of the consortiums."*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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Mike Podmore, Executive Director of STOPAIDS, spoke about how there was a generally positive experience in terms of governance and achieving coherence between the distinct actors in the consortium, but that tensions inevitably arose. Podmore explained, however, that having a set of principles such as in the AOF helped to increase accountability:

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*"Generally, it was a really positive experience for the consortium, and it has been really well received externally in terms of the participatory governance. It's a big consortium relative to the ones that I'm used to working in and as you might imagine, with a big consortium and with very different types of partners, between Global South/Global North, between community networks/global level (actors)/CATs at national level, (there were) lots of very different types of individuals. We did have some tension because of the quite considerable differences. (There are) inevitable realities of power dynamics and inequalities that exist as we're all aware of across societies and around the world. Those emerged within our consortium (and) we did recognise that and seek to address that from the very beginning, both in terms of thinking through a really clear set of principles about how we want to work. (We didn't) always necessarily pull it off, but we intend to and tried to hold all of ourselves accountable and established mechanisms for doing that."*

*(Mike Podmore, Executive Director, STOPAIDS, interviewed 20 March 2026)*

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This quote reflects accountability and commitment to anti-oppression principles, while acknowledging that tensions did arise and that there were inevitably areas where the team fell short, but how because of established principles there was a mechanism to correct and mediate instances where power asymmetry became apparent. Podmore also alluded to the inevitable power dynamic existing from "the practical realities from who is holding the money."

The following quote from Camila Gil, a representative from the Colombia CAT, illustrates the importance of regularly reflecting on the power dynamics in a project comprised of Global North and Global South collaborators that include

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<sup>19</sup> STOPAIDS (2022). Anti-Oppression Framework. <https://stopaids.org.uk/our-work/anti-oppression-framework/>

universities and civil society and the necessary adaptations to that, while commending the approach of UniAndes, who personified the AOF through their actions:

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*"It remains a project coming from the Global North, thinking from other spaces and other countries with different conditions... We have had to understand and adapt to that reality. The UniAndes team worked to (help us adapt) – we understood that what the project envisioned from the outside was perhaps different from how things are actually lived and managed here in Colombia. In the case of UniAndes, (inclusion) was constant and always keeping communities in mind. For example, thinking about trans communities who are part of the team – this went all the way from hotel logistics, where someone from UniAndes would go ahead (to the hotel) and say: 'look, there are trans people here, be careful how you ask for their name, their ID, their documents – and make sure the staff are respectful"*

*(Camila Gil, representative of the Colombia CAT, interviewed 17 March 2026)*

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Power dynamics also emerged when published materials, despite being co-created, were not always perceived as co-branded despite a neutral visual identity being established.

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*"If you look at (this report), it looks like it's from the University of Warwick – it's all purple. How is this possible when we are such a diverse consortium? I love purple, it's my favourite colour but it's the colour of the University of Warwick, and this is a consortium of many organisations with many logos. One group was assigned responsibility for managing the colour scheme. Our colours are blue and green. That's the kind of thing that if it happens once in a while it's fine, but when you start accumulating these things, they don't sit well.*

*(Catalina Gonzales-Uribe, Principal Investigator for UniAndes, interviewed 17 March 2026)*

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Gonzales-Uribe further clarified that they used the consortium colours which had been voted on by consensus, with columns for English and Spanish. This raises questions about how established institutionalism can stand in contradiction to the T-PAR project principles and speaks to the challenges of trying to popularising the use of T-PAR within the academic system. Plans to ameliorate underbudgeting for translation by raising additional funds were unsuccessful given the stark contraction of the global health funding environment. As such, we have included a lesson [below](#) on how the institution and management/leadership therein must be sensitised to project principles and the importance of adhering to them.

One community member from Vietnam expressed that they had not been sufficiently consulted on the workplan, perhaps contributing to delays in advocacy-related deliverables from that country:

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*"Project activities still had to be implemented according to the work plan that had been developed from the outset."*

*(Phong, V-CAT member from the southern network / Ho Chi Minh region, interviewed 2 March 2026)*

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It is possible, though not definitive, that added flexibility and revision of work plans, which were reviewed annually, may have improved internal coherence by embedding flexibility for amendment based on community consultation.

### Coherence between CATs across countries

CAT team members from both Colombia and Kenya placed value upon cross-CAT engagement. In the words of Cindy Zamora from the C-CAT:

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*"It is very valuable to be able to bring together intercultural knowledge, people with different experiences in digital rights from those very varied local realities to generate knowledge, alliances, and communication strategies among everyone – among four different countries speaking about similar things."*

However, Gift from the K-CAT expressed longing for a truly global CAT identity:

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*"We have not had an opportunity to feel that togetherness among the CATs globally... if we were there in the beginning, I think we would have said, can we look at ways where we can feel as one where we can feel as one CAT, i.e., the global CAT. The WhatsApp group that was created – I wish it was created in the very beginning."*

(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)

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Internal coherence could have therefore been optimised through greater cross-CAT integration and discussion, which may constitute an important lesson for future consideration.

### Coherence between advocacy and government engagement

One interviewee alluded to government bodies feeling insufficiently consulted in the beginning of the project, perhaps affecting coherence, and perhaps thereon impact, on domestic advocacy:

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*"We came to them (the county governments) at the dissemination part. We did not include them at the inception. Some of the counties said they didn't feel included in the beginning. I wish we had an inception meeting where (the government was included), and they could have understood what to expect from them while we're doing the project."*

(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)

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Overall, while there was broad external coherence with global actors such as WHO, OHCHR, and the Global Fund. Internal coherence was strong in terms of implementation of activities and reaching of project outputs across the four countries. There may have been room for improvement on internal coherence with more stringent application of the AOF, i.e., more time and space to revisit power dynamics, and with increased consultation and flexibility built in at the beginning of the project, including engaging local government actors, connecting CATs earlier, and ensuring flexibility for workplan amendments pursuant to CAT feedback.

## **Effectiveness**

Key evaluation questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Where intended outcomes achieved?</li><li>Which expected outcomes remain the furthest from being achieved? Why?</li><li>What was your experience with the participatory approach of the DHRP?</li><li>How did the participatory approach of the DHRP support or hinder the progress towards your stated goals?</li></ul>
Summary of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The project shows the most effectiveness in achieving the outcomes related to engagement of youth in advocacy on digital governance, a strong body of social science and legal literature in peer-review journals, and in engaging UN human rights mechanisms on digital health and rights.</li><li>Weaker effectiveness is shown in the long-term outcomes of ensuring T-PAR in digital governance studies is widespread, and in national governments acting upon research findings.</li></ul>

This section addresses whether the DHRP was effective in achieving outcomes established at the start of the project within the Theory of Change.

### Differing progress across theory of change outcomes

Implementers spoke to differing levels of progress across theory of change outcomes. The DHRP consortium TOR included three key long-term outcomes planned for a ten-to-fifteen-year realisation:

- A. Participatory Action Research approaches are widespread in digital governance

- B. National governments, global health agencies, and UN human rights mechanisms have taken action to strengthen and enforce rights protections in the use of data and technology, addressing issues and approaches identified by DHRP
- C. Meaningful and sustainable participation of young people in their diversity from LMICs in research, digital innovation and governance.

According to Meg Davis, Principal Investigator of the DHRP, the most progress was achieved on the “C” long-term outcome on meaningful and sustainable participation of young people – pointing to ongoing consultations with CATs and how they are keen to find funding to continue the work. This view was widespread among DHRP-internal interviewees, including several CAT members. The work on national governments, Davis said, was more mixed as advocacy only began once the research was complete. Long-term outcome A was considered most out of reach; while T-PAR was a key strength of the project, it is unclear whether other institutions have chosen or will chose T-PAR approaches in their digital governance studies.

Pegged to a timeline of three years, there was expectedly more feedback as regards medium-term outcomes, and particularly outcome M4: “Decision-makers in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, and Vietnam have increased knowledge and prioritise the issues documented by the project”.

Desiree, a C-CAT member, told us of their advocacy reaching Congress:

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*"Being able to reach Congress, make recommendations on draft legislation, and present ourselves not as individuals but as the CAT as an organised group of activists."*

*(Desiree Santiago David Benjumea, C-CAT member, in FGD conducted on 18 March 2026)*

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In Ghana, Alberta Nadutey told us that outcome M4 was the only outcome lacking sufficient progress at the national level, which corresponds to the testimony provided by Meg Davis above. Nadutey’s colleague Richard Adozgo reflected on medium-term outcome M5: “Young people in our project are engaged in advocacy for rights-based digital governance at a high level”:

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*"I will not say high level, but let's say at the medium level. We have done some media engagement which we think has reached a quiet number of people, but when you come to the governance aspect of digital change, I think we have not gotten there. I would say for M5 we should be around 60-70% out of 100."*

*(Richard Adozgo, Youth Coordinator, Ghana, FGD conducted 17 March 2026)*

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The project also saw extensive engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, documented in the section on Impact [below](#). Privacy International in particular referred to outcome M2: “UN human rights mechanisms promote government obligations to fulfil rights of all young people in digital governance”:

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*"Technically yes, we engaged with a lot of human rights mechanisms that then produced reports that reflected our recommendations. But in terms of whether governments actually take those on – that is a different story. It's also a long-term process that is probably beyond this project."*

*(Alexandrine Pirlot de Corbion, Director of Strategy, Privacy International, interviewed 20 March 2026)*

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Similar sentiments were echoed by the interviewee from OHCHR, Meg Davis, and Mike Podmore vis-à-vis engagement of human rights mechanisms. Additionally, Meg Davis commented that the project has achieved significant progress in peer-review publications of the research – which much of the research in Google scholar on digital health and rights originating from this project.

Overall, the project shows the most effectiveness in achieving the outcomes related to engagement of youth in advocacy on digital governance, a strong body of social science and legal literature in peer-review journals, and in engaging UN human rights mechanisms on digital health and rights. Weaker effectiveness is shown in the long-term outcomes of ensuring T-PAR in digital governance studies is widespread, and in national governments acting upon research findings.

### Contextual and political constraints to achieving outcomes

In Ghana, implementers spoke about the worsening human rights and legal environment in Ghana, including the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill (also known as the anti-LGBTQ bill) which was first passed by Ghana's parliament in February 2024, later lapsed due to the dissolution of parliament before the 2024 general election, and was reintroduced in Parliament in March 2025. This worsening legal environment was cited by Alberta Nadutey as a key reason why the M4 medium term outcomes on national decision-makers prioritising issues raised by the project has not been met:

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*"Given the legal environment in Ghana currently, especially with two of the key populations that we are working with – we still have a bill seeking to criminalise LGBTQI communities, and sex work is not permissible in Ghana. With that, it's been a little bit challenging because we just have to be strategic. I would say we are below 80% on that outcome."*

*(Alberta Nadutey, Researcher for Ghana, interviewed 17 March 2026)*

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There were other contextual factors in Vietnam that affected the ability to engage with national decision-makers. Trang Pham, VNP+ Project Manager's testimonial illustrates the core issues – and highlighted how a three-year project is insufficient to achieve outcomes particularly as regards national change:

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*"From the beginning we hoped to build relationships with state agencies like the Ministry of Information and Communications or units specialising in digital health... but in practice those parties have not really prioritised or shown much interest in this topic. When we shared with them, they would typically acknowledge and say they would discuss further with colleagues, but there has been no more concrete progress... Policy advocacy is a very long-term process, and three years is not enough... Just as in HIV, amending the law took more than ten years. I don't think digital health is any different."*

*(Trang Pham, VNP+ Project Manager, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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These testimonials illustrate the long-term nature of advocacy for national change – and explains reduced effectiveness on outcomes related to national governments and decisionmakers.

#### **T-PAR approach as a core effectiveness enabler**

Evident from this report is that the T-PAR approach was core to ensuring effectiveness in achieving outcomes. The involvement of the K-CAT for example was considered a key factor of the authenticity of responses from research participants:

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*"Having the K-CAT that is part of the participatory research has been a really amazing pillar of the research – we have literally carried the research on the ground... the goal of the participatory research was also to include young people and have them at the center and also to build capacity. The conversations were just flowing so easy and so genuinely. The findings were very authentic."*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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Involvement of the K-CAT has also continued beyond research data collection, with strong continuity in membership:

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*"For Kenya, all the members who we started with the project three years ago are still part and parcel of the project. None of them dropped out. All of them have been active and continued to engage at different levels... the participation approach actually has been a unique element of the of the project, and I think I would say to a big extent, it's been really effectively used within the project."*

*(Timothy Wafula, Programme Manager, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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Importantly, the T-PAR approach has created active advocates from communities of young people:

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*"The most significant change I experienced was a shift from simply sharing information to intentionally advocating for safe, rights-based digital health spaces for young people, especially YPLHIV. I became more aware of how misinformation, privacy risks, and stigma affect access to health information online. This changed how I design and deliver my work, making it more inclusive, evidence-based, and focused on digital safety and rights. It also strengthened my belief that access to accurate information is a form of power, and that young people must be supported not just to receive information, but to question, verify, and use it confidently. This change is important to me because it has made me more aware of what I consume and how I share it with the world around me."*

*(Submission to MSC with four CAT members, Ghana)*

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These particularly speak to Outcome S5 on young and emerging leaders being skilled in advocacy.

#### DHRP as a benchmark for T-PAR implementation

Though the long-term goal of seeing T-PAR as a mainstay approach in social sciences is not necessarily within view yet, Dr Koomson expressed that the success of the DHRP in terms of other outputs and outcomes signifies the viability of PAR as a method:

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*"I think for me, the main impact would be that doing participatory action research beyond borders and across countries within research-intensive universities is possible as an academic. I think that is massive. I mean, based on engagement, we've had all the issues that people have against this approach or methodology, but our success story, I think would be a benchmark for future collaborations and work...With all its challenges that comes with it, it's possible to be done."*

*(Dr Bernard Koomson, post-doctoral research fellow DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026)*

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Dr Koomson reflected that in his experience and based on conversations with academic colleagues, the DRHP stands out for how it has mainstreamed the idea of participation throughout the project duration and the different types of activities:

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*"I had been involved in some participation approaches in terms of research, in terms of programming, but it was not really as thorough as this – holistic. I mean the DHRP was designed intentionally to thread this through from top to bottom. So the philosophy has been 'if it works, as much as possible, wherever possible'. Everything we do should be participatory."*

*(Dr Bernard Koomson, post-doctoral research fellow DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026)*

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The DHRP included presentations to academics about the T-PAR implementation process, the reactions to which underscore the uniqueness of the depths of participation within the DHRP project. Other academics at a particular conference on participatory methodologies were impressed by the amount of work that the DHRP was able to complete, according to Dr Koomson. While he caveats that the long-term impact of making T-PAR a mainstay in social sciences is some ways away, the reception of the work is showing promise:

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*"I would say, from the meetings of reviewing country reports and how some of our studies and our publications have been cited, I think, for a research that is barely three years old, that is impressive, considering the fact that we spent about a year not starting the actual research itself, but doing prepping. So I think within the space of that, it's great."*

*(Dr Bernard Koomson, post-doctoral research fellow DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026)*

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The project's achievements of utilising the T-PAR approach are not limited to the research portion. The DHRP also showed effectiveness in embedding T-PAR throughout the project activities beyond research, including the consortium and management structure. Mike Podmore reflected on the challenges of learning to work within the innovative structure of the DHRP consortium yet pointed to the importance of the decision-making architecture of the project. In his view, the DHRP has been "building bridges between organisations like academia and civil society, that are not used to working

together.” Allan Maleche explained the consortium management as two-fold, i.e., governance for tracking activities and progress, as well as young adults participating in the governance through in the steering committee. This ensures, according to Maleche, that “they are then involved and see how decisions are being taken, voice their concerns and be able to participate...to be part of the ultimate committee that makes the decision.” This point is affirmed by the above quotes from Dr Koomson, who pointed out how unusual this degree of participation remains in PAR upon conversations with academic colleagues.

## Efficiency

Key evaluation questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Were resources used efficiently?</li> <li>▪ Reflecting on both the funds and human resources available to you, what worked exceptionally well in the DHRP implementation?</li> <li>▪ Would you classify any of the project components or phases as being “more value for money” than the others? Which one and why?</li> <li>▪ Where were resources stretched thin or underutilized?</li> </ul>
Summary of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Civil society and community leadership was a core driver of efficiency and value for money.</li> <li>▪ Underbudgeting affected certain actors and activities in the project and stretched their time to work on core activities.</li> <li>▪ The Ghanaian country team faced specific challenges with human resources instability, resulting in only two team members doing the work of the original intended four.</li> <li>▪ Resources distribution for C-CAT engagement was cited as particularly efficient, enabling all 12 members of the C-CAT to participate in both domestic and international events.</li> <li>▪ One interviewee raised tensions in governance and communications protocols as affecting efficiency.</li> </ul>

This criterion speaks to financial and human resources being used efficiently and in a way that brought value for money.

### Civil society leadership as a driver of value for money

The Principal Investigator of the DHRP reflected that civil society leadership was a key factor ensuring efficiency with the resources obtained:

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*"Having civil society play such a leadership role in design, implementation and governance has meant that we've gotten a lot of – as we say in the US – bang for the buck. When you're in civil society, you just can't afford to waste anything. For the most part, when I look at the overall US\$5.3 million, I'm confident that most of that has been used exceptionally efficiently."*

*(Meg Davis, Principal Investigator, Digital Health and Rights Project, interviewed 19 March 2026)*

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This quote can be read in line with numerous insights from CATs throughout this report, including in the section on effectiveness above, on knowing the domestic context and what will work best – therefore preventing the need to do additional actions and waste resources.

### Resource constraints as a structural limitation

Underbudgeting or challenges with disbursements was raised multiple times as a key barrier to completing certain activities. Securing additional funding was planned but was not realised largely in part due to the contracting funding environment, leaving some budget gaps. The Principal Investigator at the University of Warwick, for example, spoke about significant underbudgeting for the team at Warwick:

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*"We under-budgeted significantly for my team, and so we had to leverage and persuade the University of Warwick to contribute out of their own pockets and out of the overheads. The advice I got was not appropriate for a project of our size. I stand behind the decision to have most of the money go out to partners rather than have a big team in the UK - but there are pros and cons."*

*(Meg Davis, Principal Investigator, DHRP, interviewed 19 March 2026)*

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Academic conference attendance was one of items that had not been sufficiently covered by the project budget, according to Dr Bernard Koomson, post-doctoral research fellow for the DHRP at the University of Warwick Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies. Comparing the DHRP to other research experiences, he reflected on the fact that usually, academics has a fair amount of financial freedom to decide what they want to do, which conferences to attend. However, Dr Koomson reflected that this was a decision based on the PAR approach:

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*"It is because of the way the money was dispersed, mostly out of the UK to all of these collaborating organizations, just to ensure they have enough to hire the level of staff that can do what they wanted to do [and] the field work,"*

*(Dr Bernard Koomson, post-doctoral research fellow DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026)*

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Budget decisions, therefore, appear to have been guided largely by the commitment the DHRP made to the PAR approach,

Additionally, the project had significantly underbudgeted for translation, resulting in, for example, UniAndes needing to spend additional time translating documentation from English into Spanish and vice-versa, an experience Catalina Gonzalez-Urbe described as 'exhausting'. Privacy International also raised the issue of underbudgeting for their team, receiving a small percentage of the total grant budget, which limited the scope of what it could deliver in terms of its role to undertake and coordinate international advocacy as well as to be able to engage effectively across working groups, which were essential to the T-PAR approach.

Broader developments in global health financing, particular foreign assistance cuts by the United States, meant that some CAT members became less engaged with the DHRP due to the need to prioritise paid work. In the words of Allan Maleche from Kenya:

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*"I think in terms of the cuts by the US for their funding on HIV, TB and Malaria, it affected some of the community groups that we work with, because some of the organizations and some of their work depended a lot on US funding, and so with the cut of that their involvement, their existence, also dipped a bit, because they then had to prioritize if they didn't have general and steady income, how the involvement in the processes then became quite challenging in the circumstances."*

In summary, there was underbudgeting that resulted in reduced efficiencies affecting certain implementers, including the University of Warwick, UniAndes, Privacy International, KELIN, and Ghana implementers. Limited availability of experiential data on the time requirements by all consortium members to comply with the T-PAR-guided internal systems appears to have contributed to underbudgeting.

#### HR instability as a structural constraint specific to Ghana

In Ghana, inefficiencies resulted from the implementing organisation's internal human resources instability, with key members leaving the NAP+ Ghana team:

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*"We lost somebody already on the project, it took some time to replace that person, and after replacing the person, due to oppression, that person was sacked, and it took another long time to get another person who didn't have the requisite experience. For human resource, it has been a challenge."*

(Richard Adozgo, Youth Coordinator, Ghana, FGD conducted 17 March 2026)

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This was corroborated by Alberta Nadutey, who said:

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*"Because of the management issues in-country, we ended up losing people who were very skilled. A lot of the burden was on Richard and I – we were supposed to be a four-member team."*

(Alberta Nadutey, Researcher for Ghana, interviewed 17 March 2026)

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This speaks to one of the reasons why there has been limited T-PAR academic research as modelled in the DHRP. Traditionally, strong reliance on local partners tends to be seen as risky, as recalled by Dr Bernard Koomson, when he reflected on conversations at a participatory research methodologies conference where he presented the DHRP approach.<sup>20</sup>

#### Resource distribution and impact on participation

The Colombian CAT provided a positive experience of how UniAndes successfully and equitably distributed financing to ensure fair participation and opportunities for each C-CAT member. This is consistent with documents and blogposts which show diverse representation of C-CAT members in various fora, both domestic and international. In the words of Camila Gil:

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*"There was a system of resource and opportunity distribution. For example, here there was an intention for all 12 people to travel and have advocacy presence in spaces. There were places like Ghana where only one person travelled to all countries – and that, in terms of resource distribution, I think is something very powerful that happened at Universidad de los Andes"*

(Camila Gil, C-CAT member, interviewed 17 March 2026)

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#### Administrative inefficiencies with T-PAR

Some challenges that affected efficiency included administrative bottlenecks that slowed down progress:

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*"For me, (a key issue around efficiency) was one around the frequency of meetings, especially for the communications working group, but also designing the format of the conversation so that there are very clear things you're coming to do and speak for, say, 45 minutes, we want to know the progress. Has this been done? Has this not been done to be able to save time for people, and not to be able to give people on a call for too long without clear agenda, circulating information early, for people to be able to have*

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<sup>20</sup> Dr Bernard Koomson, post-graduate research fellow with DRHP, interviewed 12 March 2026.

*access, having information in a repository where people can then be able to quickly check and see what was discussed last time, are they able to move forward and aspects like that. So it's just removing some of the admin bottlenecks in the circumstances to try and ensure that we are able to then move forward"*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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Reflections from other interviewees underscored this point that T-PAR requires time commitments that can be challenging to manage across a large consortium. While there was some freedom in how deeply consortium members engage in the approval processes, the DHRP had set a 'ground rule' expectation in the consortium MOU that participation in decision-making and output production was required. Dr Koomson described how the DHRP participatory process differed significantly from other participatory projects in which he had previously been involved:

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*"Basically, whatever even we academics churn out in terms of research, documents, tools, literature review etc. is subject to review by everyone in the consortium who wants to do it. And that is very, very impressive and interesting, because as I said, I may not have seen any kind of PAR design that does that. So we get to see everything everyone does. You may decide not to comment, but that's up to you."*

*(Dr Bernard Koomson, post-doctoral research fellow with DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026.)*

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The efficiency challenge with the bureaucracy of the DHRP approach also showed not only in the amount of time that decision-making can take, but also in who gets to make the final decision and based on what criteria. Dr Koomson stated that:

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*"With this experience also come issues about technicality, know how, and knowledge in that area. Critique [during review of a specific output] may not necessarily be appropriate, but you expect that if you open the floodgates. Also the time of doing this, because tell you what, if this was a traditional academic grant for doing the research, publishing result or findings, writing your papers, going to some conferences to obviously share the findings, I believe this would have been done a long time ago, because that's straightforward. But because of the way we work and the way things go in circles in terms of reviews or document approval, this means that you need to have some time, extra time."*

*(Dr Bernard Koomson, post-doctoral research fellow with DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026)*

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Maleche also spoke about extensive discussions on branding and colours for the coalition, different standards between different categories of implementers (academics versus civil society), and the need to remain flexible to be efficient:

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*"In the communications working group, (finding consensus) as people who are in a university, people who are in civil society, people who are community groups (and getting people to agree) on a manual or a logo. People have different perspectives. Those are some of the aspects that were very difficult, which are the colour schemes, which are the colours for the for the coalition? When do you put logos? How do you get approval if approval is not forthcoming? All that nonsense was not exciting for me... People have got different standards, people have got different expectations, and people operate at different paces. Being more accommodative (and more) understanding (was important to) try to be able to move things forward"*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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This testimonial speaks to a balance between ensuring inclusion and remaining flexible enough to move progress forward in an efficient manner. This illustrates key trade-offs between ensuring effective attribution while moving more efficiently towards achieving outcomes. However, when participation is seen as valuable, what is generally understood as efficiency may not be the most appropriate measurement. As Molly Pugh Jones pointed out, perceived inefficiencies could just as much be deriving from working internationally or with many people:

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*"I think STOPAIDS as an organization is quite well versed in what could be perceived as inefficiencies of participation, in terms of it takes a lot of time, it takes a lot of resource, and I think we're very comfortable with that and able to build that in. I think when I'm talking about inefficiencies and in that structure, it's not necessarily to do with the integration of participation. It's to do with bringing together different ways of working across cultures, across sectors, having advocates and academics and community groups working all together, and capacity and the inefficiencies in the broader sense, like also emotional capacity and language capacity and clarity of expectations and roles. I think participation was done really well within that."*

*(Molly Pugh Jones, Advocacy Manager, STOPAIDS, interviewed 9 March 2026)*

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Overall, and especially considering the breadth of activities in this T-PAR pilot, the DHRP project under consideration is evaluated as effective in achieving key outcomes.

## Impact

Key evaluation questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What has changed about your beliefs or perceptions of digital health and human rights as a result of your engagement with DHRP?</li><li>What has changed about your practice (activities)?</li><li>What would you say is the main impact of the project?</li></ul>
Summary of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strong delivery on short- and medium-term outcomes, with clear movement towards long-term impact.</li><li>Significant changes documented in young people on individual level and community level, including leadership at national, regional, and global levels by young people.</li><li>Documented awareness creation and responsive action by national and international institutions, including normative embedding of DHRP findings in policies and frameworks of international organisations.</li></ul>

The OECD-DAC criteria *Impact* describes the “extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.”<sup>21</sup> For the purpose of this evaluation, we orient this category alongside the DHRP TOR, reproduced in the introduction of this report

### External Factors and Their Effect on Long-Term Impact

The three long-term outcomes which guide the work of the DHRP are:

- 1) PAR approaches are widespread in digital governance;
- 2) National governments, global health agencies, and UN human rights mechanisms have taken action to strengthen and enforce rights protections in the use of data and technology, addressing issues and approaches identified by DHRP; and
- 3) meaningful and sustainable participation of young people in their diversity from LMICs in research, digital innovation and governance.

At the point of this evaluation, none of the long-term outcomes have so far been achieved, which was expected. However, it is the DHRP’s anticipation that they may be achieved within the next decade, with appropriate funding. As one interviewee put it, “all long-term goals are within sight.”<sup>22</sup>

The main limitation for the achievement of long-term outcomes was time for building strong engagement of advocacy targets and the concurrent time investment to provide more advocacy-focused skills-building for young people. The political and legal environments in Ghana and Vietnam also played a significant role in requiring a long-term perspective on advocacy impact beyond the three-year project period. As one interviewee put it:

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*“In Colombia and in Kenya, to some extent there were tangible things going on in the legislative level that more advancements in national advocacy could be made there, as opposed to in Vietnam and Ghana the complete opposite happened. It’s quite risky for actually meaningful national advocacy to take place on some of these issues.”*

*(Sarah Simms, Privacy International, advocacy working group co-lead, interviewed 9 March 2026)*

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The consortium could not have anticipated how dramatically the new U.S. Presidency would come to alter the public health sector beginning in January 2025. Pausing of foreign funding followed by the cutting of the entire foreign aid department USAID initiated a significant decline in international funding availability for public health and caused severe disruptions for civil society organisations in the field of HIV/AIDS as well as re-prioritisation conversations within global health agencies, the UN, national governments, and philanthropic institutions. The effects of U.S. funding cuts became relevant for the DHRP implementation quite quickly, especially with regards to engagement with UN agencies:

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*“In terms of funding levels for UN agencies, we have seen less UN agencies having dedicated time for folks who are working on this kind of work. So like UNAIDS, we had people we wanted to come say to ICASA, to speak and be on panels [with DHRP], but they were not able to send people because either they didn’t have funding, or they were short staffed, or they were going through a transition. That limited some of the engagement of some of the UN agencies in terms of being able to actively participate. We still managed to get involvement from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, from WHO, and we had meetings in Geneva, but had challenges getting folks like UNAIDS to*

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<sup>21</sup> OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second Edition), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es>.

<sup>22</sup> Timothy Wafula, KELIN, key informant interview, 11 March 2026.

*come on board and to be part of the conversation, because of the transition they were going through and the funding cuts that they were facing."*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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The external evaluation showed, however, that despite massive cuts to foreign aid in a matter of months, the DHRP did make clear, documented progress towards medium-term outcomes and, as in the first quote above, is progressing towards its long-term outcomes. Below is a series of impacts observed through MSC, KII, and FGD with consortium and CAT members, as well as external stakeholders that interacted with the DHRP on advocacy or implementation of T-PAR recommendations.

### Using Transnational Participatory Action Research to deconstruct hierarchy

A defining part of the DHRP is its selection of T-PAR as the project's methodology. PAR is recognized for the quality of its research outputs. It is also credited with facilitating simultaneous additional benefits, which include increasing skills and agency of participants; increased data validity through involvement of people with lived experiences; and ability to provide data for corrective action.<sup>23</sup> The sections above already discussed some merits of choosing T-PAR for this specific project. While not explicit the verbiage of the DHRP goals or in the project justification, T-PAR is a potentially impactful tool in the context of HIV: the history of PAR is tied to "communities experiencing oppression"<sup>24</sup> and the communities of the AIDS movement have long embraced the philosophy of "nothing about us without us"<sup>25</sup>, underscoring the theoretical and practical importance of choosing a T-PAR approach for a research project on digital health and rights that focuses on "young adults living with HIV and young key populations in low- and middle-income countries".<sup>26</sup> PAR as a method aims to counter the power imbalances inherent in academic research by including lived experience in its definition of knowledge and therefore of benefit to scientific inquiry. T-PAR intentionally brings together different types of practitioners and academic researchers, who need to (re)consider how their positionality influences the project design, research methodology, implementation, and analysis.

An important step in operationalising T-PAR, therefore, is to build joint definitions, establish ways of working that are cognisant of differing practices and ways of working, and examine the power imbalances inherent in transnational collaboration, which is evident in the fact that the consortium MOU took several months to develop. This effort can be time intensive, yet taking the time builds the foundation for impact, because it acknowledges the learning and unlearning that is necessary for everyone involved in the project and provides ample opportunity to dive deep into everyone's expertise. The DHRP work plan allocated two years for transnational research in four countries, likely recognising the need to build a strong consortium that would be able to implement T-PAR in a rigorous way that would hold up to peer review. As part of a prior iteration of the DHRP, STOPAIDS developed an Anti-Oppression Framework (AOF), which the TOR mentions alongside research protocols and tools in short-term outcomes. The AOF on the STOPAIDS website is built around the values of humility, shifting power, solidarity, and co-ownership.<sup>27</sup> According to several interviews, it was regularly referenced throughout the DHRP implementation period under review, e.g. in meetings, workshops, including by specialised facilitators in an effort to train everyone in the project.<sup>28</sup> Interviewees pointed to concerted efforts to implement the AOF and the general value of such a policy:

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*"We had a good framework. We had thought of the Global North not oppressing the Global South, or people not feeling oppressed or dominant because certain people may be more superior in the sense of the academic or financial [compensation]."*

*(Consortium member, requested no attribution, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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The evaluation confirmed that, unsurprisingly, the operationalisation of the AOF was not without challenges. Structural limitations of transnational collaboration include the reality of time difference, different languages, different customs, different organisational cultures, and longstanding institutional norms and hierarchies. Interviewees shared that power differences still played into the dynamic. Examples provided ranged from conflicts arising around timelines for deliverables, some decision making that followed the practices of larger institutions within the consortium, accessibility of meetings due to time difference, inaccessible consortium meeting locations for some partners due to visa regulations, as well as limited interpretation and translation.<sup>29</sup> Even within a participatory model that aims to engage in more horizontal decision-

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<sup>23</sup> Howard, J. (2024) 'Participatory Action Research', Participatory Methods website. <https://www.participatorymethods.org/methodology/participatory-action-research/>

<sup>24</sup> Wakeford, T. and Sanchez Rodriguez, J. (2018) 'Participatory action research: towards a more fruitful knowledge' in Facer, K. and Dunleavy, K. (eds.) Connected Communities Foundation Series. Bristol: University of Bristol/AHRC Connected Communities Programme

<sup>25</sup> Advisory Committee of People with AIDS. "The Denver Principles." Statement presented at the Second National AIDS Forum, Denver, CO, June 12, 1983

<sup>26</sup> Digital Health and Rights Project. About us. <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/digital-health-and-rights-project/>

<sup>27</sup> STOPAIDS (2022). Anti-Oppression Framework. <https://stopaids.org.uk/our-work/anti-oppression-framework/>

<sup>28</sup> Interviews incl. with Steering Committee members, CAT members.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

making, bureaucratic processes can seem stifling when some members are accustomed to a more trust-based model of operation, as one submission to the MSC meeting stated:

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*"Learning from the participation in the consortium, it has been a big learning on how to engage with a more hierarchical way of working... a quite strict environment and how to adjust to deliver on every commitment."*

*(Written MSC submission, requested no attribution.)*

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This comment referenced specifically bureaucratic processes required by traditional academic institutions and peer-reviewed journals. For the DHRP project under review, the University of Warwick was the primary recipient of the grant funds. As a UK academic institution, the University of Warwick has detailed bureaucratic requirements for procurement, hiring, insurance, among others, that create barriers to partnering with smaller institutions, including from the Global South, which may not have – nor can practically purchase or afford – the exact insurance policy required per university rules.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the university restricted procurement of local interpreters in Colombia and Vietnam. These rules at times created an impasse in project implementation that according to qualitative data collected for this evaluation, have resulted in delays of activities and outputs. The primacy of bureaucratic rules, therefore, can factor into the power-imbalance among consortium members.

Interestingly, the requirements of the AOF presented adaptation challenges for consortium members from both Global North and Global South. As one Global South interviewee and CAT member described:

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*"Of course, the power dynamics always have a place in everything. I'm happy about the DHRP, they tried their level best to close that power dynamic, but also a little percentage was there. I wouldn't say it was anyone's fault. I just think when you're dealing with consortium leads, there's always that you pull back and just let them do the majority of what is important. You don't just manoeuvre with them the way I manoeuvre with my fellow CATs. It just played out in that sense. But I wouldn't say it's their fault. I think it's something internalized. We felt included and respected."*

*(CAT member, requested no attribution)*

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This describes the situation that institutionalism plays into many collaborative efforts, which DHRP recognised at the outset of the DHRP and attempted to counter with the AOF. The fact that behavioural changes are necessary from all consortium members as indicated in the above quote was also referenced in an interview with another Global South interviewee, who reflected on the realities that time constraints and academic publishing standards placed on the consortium:

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*"Even anti-oppression itself, when you look at it from the perspective of an organisation in the Global South or an organization in the Global North, or a person in Latin America and a person in Africa and a person in Europe or a person in Vietnam, it's going to mean different things for each of us. And when you have deliverables that have a deadline that needs to be met, there is an ongoing tension about, can we really do anti-oppression work within this framework that we set up to do? We all agreed to this [governance model]. But then we're trying to achieve anti-oppression within a program that is set up to be very much structured. You have to give the donor certain things; there are things that we just have to do. So how can we also challenge oppression in so many ways, when actually we don't have time to even get into those discussions, and then even less, to actually do actions that speak to those discussions and reflections. So for me, sometimes it feels a little bit superficial to think that we are doing anti-oppression work within such rigid boundaries."*

*(MSC focus group discussion, requested no attribution)*

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Within these limitations, the DHRP was successful in creating a participatory framework that allowed many different people to bring their specific expertise, as indicated in this quote from a written submission to the CAT MSC meeting as part of this evaluation:

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<sup>30</sup> As example, the firm contracted for this evaluation, Matahari Global Solutions, encountered significant practical challenges with fulfilling the university's insurance requirements for contracted organisations.

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*“The CAT model is very inclusive as expertise is very cross cutting and interdisciplinary”*

*(Written submission to 17 March 2026 MSC meeting.)*

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The inclusivity and interdisciplinary approach of the DHRP referenced in the above quote was mentioned positively across all interviews. Several CAT members commented on the personal growth that they took away from observing challenging situations and their resolution. One CAT member described how being part of a multi-stakeholder consortium furthered their personal and professional growth:

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*“I have never been part of a transnational project. For me, it was a great experience to just see how different power balances work and how to manoeuvre in such a huge consortium with different partners who have different responsibilities. I've learned a lot about how to safely handle conflicts, especially in such a huge Consortium, and just seeing how we were able to gracefully do it for the part that I was able to see. I saw how we navigated well through the conflicts and also [saw] the support that each organization was able to offer one another.”*

*(CAT member, requested no attribution)*

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The AOF and governance structure therefore also appeared helpful in e.g. working through conflict and because it allowed for the discussion of power dynamics. It is important to note that these examples of where the AOF was insufficient are not a negative indictment of the DHRP per se; instead, they show a level of introspection and reflections that the T-PAR approach has allowed. Moreover, it is an illustration of how challenging it is to implement new approaches within the financial and time constraints of traditional funding structures and the normative constraints of academic publishing. As one project implementer stated “I've only worked in two global projects, so if I compare it to other ways of working in the other project where I've been working, this feels a lot more rigid... In my mind, it has to do with the research approach.” This points to a potential lesson-learned from this project that conflict between innovative project philosophy and established institutional/normative systems including research for peer-reviewed publications can show up in conflicts among project partners; and the necessity to address differences in working culture throughout any transnational collaboration.

Within the TOC of the DHRP, the reflections on the AOF and the operationalisation of the T-PAR are important for the realisation of long-term outcomes. They legitimise the T-PAR approach for use with marginalised communities and highlight the importance of actively addressing hierarchies for meaningful youth engagement in research and advocacy. The impact exists in that power dynamics were constantly addressed and negotiated within the consortium, which is a valuable experience and data point in a field that has long been criticised for perpetuating colonial attitudes.<sup>31</sup>

### Awareness creation among national policymakers as a near-term impact

Awareness creation among policymakers and other decisionmakers on different levels was an important milestone in the TOR. Advocacy was ongoing throughout the project, though nationally focused advocacy mainly started after the research and analyses had been concluded, in year three of the project. In each of the four countries, there was evidence of engagement of national government actors, most of which is provided in the individual country case studies.

In Kenya, as well as in other country contexts, interviewees reported that their information was new to many government actors with whom they were able to share the research results. In the words of the K-CAT coordinator:

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*“The Ministries of Health and ICT – they were very green in this area. They knew digital rights were very important, but they had not really tapped into that angle of marginalised groups. So it was a very interesting, new area of conversation to them, even for policymakers: ‘Oh, so persons living with HIV*

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<sup>31</sup> See e.g., Hussain M, Sadigh M, Sadigh M, Rastegar A, Sewankambo N (2023). Colonization and decolonization of global health: which way forward? *Glob Health Action*. 2023 Dec 31;16(1):2186575. doi: 10.1080/16549716.2023.2186575. PMID: 36940174; PMCID: PMC10035955.

*actually have more challenges than we would imagine.' And so I think our outcome was awareness creation."*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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In Vietnam, a country in which civil society space has been closing,<sup>32</sup> V-CAT members reported several opportunities to engage policymakers on different levels. For example, one interviewee stated that V-CAT members had gained access to important national spaces where they could raise community concerns and speak as both community representatives and project members.<sup>33</sup>

Vietnamese interviewees stated that their ability to advocate in the way that they did was partially due to the validity of the research and their existing connections.<sup>34</sup> They recounted how a DHRP-funded small-grant activity in Hung Yen gained strong support from the provincial Department of Health and evolved into a plan for recurring school-based outreach.<sup>35</sup> While this is not yet the anticipated national level engagement, it provides a realistic view of how dissemination activities can expand into opportunities for broader engagement and community building.

In Colombia, existing relationships were the basis for framing research data in ways suitable for government partners at different levels, including formal national government engagement and local spaces. The T-PAR report and recommendations were used to craft narratives that proved useful for Colombian stakeholders.<sup>36</sup>

In Ghana, while an operationally difficult political environment prevented much progress with national policymakers, G-CAT members noted that they had gained legitimacy and were often called upon when digital health and rights issues arose.

National advocacy encountered varying challenges, which held valuable lessons for young people in the CATs. Winnie Gift Inganga described her takeaways of engaging the government in the following quote:

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*"It was very difficult dealing with government stakeholders. So I would say that has been one of our biggest challenges. We did not include them at the inception; we came to them at the dissemination part. And I think if something we could have done differently is include them at inception... Maybe an inception meeting where we have the government, and they can understand what to expect while we're doing the project, and how we are going to be leading them throughout the project and after."*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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The challenges that Winnie Gift Inganga mentioned were important, because they prompted action by a WHO Regional Office, as reported by Derrick Muneene:

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*"The results were as expected – very few countries were actually investing in gender equity and rights. That particular revelation went a long way – one of our regions, the Southeast Asia Regional Office, picked that particular report and is using it for influencing the policy agenda... The findings were presented to WHO member states at the last World Health Assembly. There is a line item that specifically cites Warwick University and the DHRP work."*

*(Derrick Muneene, Unit Head, Digital Health Capacity Building and Collaboration, WHO, interviewed 16th March 2026)*

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Limited existing investment does not necessarily indicate that there is no interest in the subject matter. Alongside the challenges in engaging with some government actors that the K-CAT pointed out, there are positive examples of government engagement and interest, generated through different formats that the DHRP utilised in its outreach and dissemination of research findings. For example, DHRP members were able to attract the attention of governments that were not directly targets of their advocacy, through engagement at an international conference:

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<sup>32</sup> See e.g., [https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/20250717\\_vietnam\\_eu\\_bp\\_en.pdf](https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/20250717_vietnam_eu_bp_en.pdf); <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2025/10/25/how-civil-society-groups-and-activists-are-planning-to-reclaim-civic-space-in-vietnam/>; <https://macmillan.yale.edu/southeast-asia/closing-civic-space-vietnam-detentions-trials-tightened-regulation-restricted>

<sup>33</sup> VCAT HCM member (KII01) 3 March 2026.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> VCAT HN (SP, KII02) 2 March 2026.

<sup>36</sup> Catalina Gonzalez-Urbe, Principal Investigator for UniAndes, interviewed 18 March 2025

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*"There are a number of webinars we did where donors were there, where government officials were there. They were interested. They got the research findings. At ICASA, we had other countries like Nigeria, like Ivory Coast, interested in what we are presenting, and their government officials came to some of our booths... So I would say yes, to an extent that has happened, decision makers in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam have increased knowledge. This is still ongoing for us, especially training government agencies and other people around these particular issues and engaging with them in round tables."*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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Maleche points to an important recognition that several interviewees reported, i.e. that at the time of data collection, several dissemination and advocacy activities were still in process that may yield additional results in the future.

### *Institutional applicability and uptake: embedding outputs in normative frameworks and UN resolutions*

Awareness raising is one step towards creating policy changes, one of the three long-term outcomes for the DHRP. While interviewees recognised that policy change and new laws require sustained effort over time and for some this goal appeared still out of reach, requiring more resources including funding and time for training of different stakeholders in order to create sufficient buy-in for policy change.<sup>37</sup> Regardless, the DHRP was able to produce first tangible results with regards to UN frameworks. A prominent example is the engagement with the WHO on their Global Strategy on Digital Health, which Derrick Muneene recounted in his interview:

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*"The biggest achievement we've done is to hang this DHRP output into those resolutions and frameworks... The Global Strategy on Digital Health is translated in the six UN languages. The WSIS resolutions are also translated in the UN languages... We will anchor the work of the project within our normative document – the Global Strategy on Digital Health and the WSIS. That's key to ensure there is a strengthened advocacy on the topic, because it's hanging through a resolution."*

*(Derrick Muneene, WHO, interviewed 16 March 2026)*

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Another WHO official also offered a testimonial that spoke to the normative embedding of DHRP findings into their work:

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*"They carried out this assessment of how well human rights and equity and gender equality issues have been considered in national digital health strategies in 20 countries – that was something WHO had not done. Although the global digital health strategy calls for these issues to be addressed, we saw that they are not. That has helped refocus WHO's work to put more emphasis on the integration of rights and equity considerations in these strategies, and also in the development of the new global digital health strategy."*

*(Pauliina (Lina) Nykänen-Rettaroli, Senior Technical Lead on Human Rights, WHO, interviewed 9 March 2026)*

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DHRP-driven research on digital norms and engagement with UN agencies resulted in this annotated list of UN documents that provide additional information for civil society actors who wish to engage in related advocacy.<sup>38</sup>

The DHRP consortium partners also worked with different entities in the Global Fund to create guidelines for funding mechanisms that should eventually influence the priorities that state actors submit in their country proposals to the Global Fund. Alistair Shaw of the Global Fund Communities, Rights, and Gender division recounted engagements and conversations with e.g., a staff member of STOPAIDS, both in formal Global Fund governance mechanisms and direct bilateral conversations, that prompted Shaw to request STOPAIDS to develop a tailored checklist to provide guardrails for Global Fund grant making with regards to digital health and human rights, described in more detail below. The impact here lies in the action of Shaw as a representative of a multilateral institution seeking out a DHRP consortium member to repackage DHRP research findings into a product that will be actively used by an external institution.

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Allan Maleche, KELIN, 11 March 2026.

<sup>38</sup> Imalingat, Tara (2025). UN guidance on Digital Health, Gender Equality, and Human Rights: An annotated list. <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/news-and-blog/un-guidance-on-digital-health-gender-equality-and-human-rights-an-annotated-list/> 43

In addition, DHRP and STOPAIDS published a guidance for civil society and community organisations on where and how to integrate digital health and human rights in their country application to the Global Fund Grant Cycle 8 (GC8)<sup>39</sup>, a product that should increase awareness of how digital health and human rights interact, and thereby eventually support country accountability through civil society advocacy for developing and including respective programming as part of country grant applications. While most of the uptake component of the anticipated impact is suggestive at this point, similar civil society-focused documents have in the past been successful approaches to influence government programming.

### Transformation of belief and practice by project implementers

Interestingly, many project implementers i.e. members of the consortium across the different working groups reflected on their own personal learning and transformation throughout the project. Some of the reflections are based on the recommendations of the T-PAR, whereas others shared their changes in e.g., program design and budget considerations, based on the work within the consortium and with young people through the CATs.

The team of KELIN in Kenya has worked with people affected by HIV for a long time, including addressing discrimination in healthcare settings. However, Timothy Wafula expressed curiosity for continuing along the line of thinking that the DHRP had started for him:

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*"When we continue with our work, that's something that I myself think we are really interested in to see how we are able to develop and design the kind of interventions that address the harms; support, facilitate, and create referral pathways for redress."*

*(Timothy Wafula, Programme Manager, KELIN, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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Allan Maleche similarly explained that the issues that young adults have shared through the T-PAR have expanded what he understands to be his scope of work. He said the following in a key informant interview:

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*"I think what has changed for me is a deep understanding of the challenges young people are facing. I just thought maybe it's a lack of a phone or the lack of data, but there are deeper issues they are facing in terms of violence, being bullied, facing a lot of violence that is actually affecting those living with HIV, their ability to adhere [to medication]. They are still facing stigma. And so for me, it brought into light that the digital space is also a space that needs more safeguards to protect people. And so that is how I am approaching it, to say it may be a nice, shiny tool, but how safeguarded are the people in these circumstances? That's my approach to it now: what are the safeguards? How are people being protected before you decide to roll it out?"*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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This adjustment in thinking i.e., how consortium members have already assessed the DHRP learnings in terms of necessity of future work that indicates a strong potential for sustainability. Maleche shared practical considerations that similarly indicate a desire for long-term work with young people affected by HIV. Regarding any changes to practises based on the DHRP experience, he said:

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*"I think we are being cautious, especially where we invite young people for online meetings. We try to see, do they have [data] bundles? Can we support them to be able to participate? ... We're also trying to ensure when we involve them for work or when we write projects, we include stipends for them, and even though they are coming, say as key informants, or they're coming to support some relevant information, we try to ensure there's some appreciation of their time, so that we just don't exploit them and get their views. Working closely with them to say, look, we are thinking of this project. We want to apply for it. What does the K-CAT think? Are you guys involved? Are you interested? Would this be an area of interest? Or them coming to say, 'oh, we've seen this. Can KELIN apply and work with us?' So [there is] greater interaction with the community of the young people that we've created to move forward on these particular issues."*

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<sup>39</sup> Pugh-Jones, Molly (2026). A Guide to Digital Health and Human Rights in Global Fund Grant Cycle 8. [https://digitalhealthandrights.com/resource-library/a-guide-to-digital-health-and-human-rights-in-global-fund-grant-cycle-](https://digitalhealthandrights.com/resource-library/a-guide-to-digital-health-and-human-rights-in-global-fund-grant-cycle-8)

The duality of the trust that was built between members of the CATs and consortium member organisations therefore appears to be an important factor of the project success that may equally propel the work forward. Similarly to Maleche, Wafula explained that the T-PAR method and the practical application of the approach throughout the DHRP portfolio has left him with new insights:

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*"I think I gained quite a lot from the research method that was used, the kind of governance, coalition management and governance, the kind of collaborative advocacy with the CATs, with other organizations. I think all these were really key things, which, as I design other projects, I can always think about how to integrate some of the components. So these are skills that I will still be able to carry forward."*

(Timothy Wafula, Programme Manager, KELIN, interviewed 11 March 2026)

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Wafula here speaks to the integral tenets of T-PAR that we mentioned above, the participatory approach not only in research but the complementary focus on actionable research that leads to advocacy that is also in collaboration with others. Juliet Nakazibwe of Restless Development (RD) in Uganda oversaw capacity building and support for the CATs, an expansion of RD's focus on youth movement building. During a MSC session, Nakazibwe reflected on the stories of personal change and how these also extend into their organisation's work. She said:

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*"One thing that really comes to my mind is a wow around how this program has not just impacted the young people that we have been working with, but you know, it speaks to the transformative change that has also happened within the people who have been running this program, and the desire and the passion and the commitment not to look at this as a project that comes and goes. What I see is transformative change into something that will live on because of the level of awareness that has been pointed out. A desire and ambition to reach out to communities so that it's not a program that has come and gone but really transformed people's lives. The results from that will really live on beyond this project."*

(Juliet Nakazibwe, Restless Development, interviewed 19 March 2026.)

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When asked how the project will tangibly "live on", Nakazibwe pointed to several examples. She said,

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*"We are very intentional in making sure that we take these learnings forward. We use the findings from the research that was launched. We use the training resources and toolkits that we have developed to integrate them in our ongoing work, because we feel something has to be done. And despite the end of the grant, we still have a lot of other opportunities we can explore to make sure that people understand their digital rights more broadly. But in particular, their digital health rights."*

(Juliet Nakazibwe, Restless Development, interviewed 19 March 2026.)

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What is interesting in reading these statements from consortium members is how similar they are to reflections from young people in the CATs who, as explained above and further below, also developed new skills, experienced shifts in beliefs, as well as felt a resolve to want to continue to change their lived realities.

## Community-level rights consciousness as a near-term impact

The participation in a T-PAR process, including the professional learning opportunities and collaboration in a transnational governance structure are an important part of the learning that youth participants and implementers reportedly took away from this project. In fact, several interviewees expressed similar sentiments to this written submission to the MSC meeting:

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*"Personally - learning about technology facilitated abuse around the world and about digital rights in general and professionally - navigating the way the consortium works and the advocacy working group and the impact the project has had in practical ways. Learning about digital rights, being aware of the way in which the digital experiences and abuses people go through in the different countries has really been important for me at a personal level to be more of a champion for digital rights in my own community. At a professional level, I've learnt a lot from the advocacy point of view, I had a big growth on learning how this consortium operates. As I mentioned, being more aware of the reality of digital rights and the violence that exists in that space and being more vigilant in my own community about this. It has made me more aware of the dangers that exist and also just be more of an activist for digital rights in my country. Because I am an activist who also wants to make my country better and to be involved in public policy around this topic."*

(Written submission to MSC meeting on 19 March 2026)

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This quote from a CAT member raises several layers of personal, professional, and community-level learning. With regards to the latter, the skills and knowledge increase of the CAT members expanded into their communities. Several interviews point to growth in their knowledge on digital rights. For example, one Consortium member explored in their written submission how CAT members have influenced their communities, like so:

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*"Seeing the young people that we work with become confident experts in the field of digital rights. I've seen them grow into it for the past couple of years, from the first meetings, to then going to speaking engagements, networking and making change in their communities. It has been empowering to them and their communities and it has been the most vital part of achieving actual advocacy goals for the project."*

(Written submission to the 19 March 2026 MSC meeting)

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A CAT member in Colombia provided an example of how thus empowered communities may react when faced with rights infringements:

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*"In my territory there are people who are already talking about digital rights as a result of this project. It is very common in my town to have power cuts, and now there are people who are thinking: if there is a power cut, that directly affects access to healthcare, education, work, and civic participation. I think that is one of the great achievements this project has made possible."*

(Camilo Restrepo, C-CAT, FGD conducted 18 March 2026)

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According to Camilo, there is a new realisation of what rights are and how they appear in people's daily lives. Another C-CAT member agreed, however, cautioned to not mistake raised rights consciousness for actual changes in policy or practice. Desiree stated:

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*"The gain is definitively that people can name themselves as rights-holders in the digital environment. But I also recognise that this research is not going to fundamentally resolve the country's current situation – we have scratched the surface. That is where the important work will be: how to achieve that large-scale mobilisation so that we can fundamentally address all the barriers we face."*

(Desiree, C-CAT member, FGD conducted 18 March 2026)

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The connection between increased awareness and tangible change that the above C-CAT member refers to can be tenuous, however, the evaluation team received several written submissions that explore community-level changes that show how rights consciousness can lead to individual action for themselves or within their community. One written MSC story illustrated how changes in their community were slowly progressing, as below:

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*"From my perspective, the most significant change that has occurred in my community as a result of the Digital Health and Rights Project is the increased awareness of technology-facilitated abuse and other digital rights issues... One example of this change is that young people in the community are now more open to discussing their experiences in digital spaces. Some participants who previously felt isolated in their experiences now recognize that others are facing similar challenges... In some cases, young people have begun to seek advice or support when they encounter harmful situations online, rather than remaining silent."*

*(Written submission to CAT MSC, 19 March 2026)*

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This experience brings focus to the power of shared experiences and how such knowledge can expand the level of care within a community. It illustrates how T-PAR opens the possibility of learning new knowledge that is important on a personal, professional, and community level.

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*"The most significant change in my community resulting from the DHRP is improved access to reliable digital health information and increased awareness of digital rights among young people, especially YPLHIV. More young people are now able to identify misinformation, protect their privacy online, and confidently seek accurate SRHR information through trusted platforms. This change was evident in how participants engaged during the Thomson Reuters Foundation and Global Fund Breaking Barriers Africa dissemination sessions, asked informed questions, and shared verified information within their networks. The DHRP played a key role in providing me with the knowledge and necessary tools to facilitate digital literacy and create safe spaces for learning and discussion. This is significant because it reduces harm caused by misinformation and empowers young people to make informed decisions about their health and rights."*

*(CAT member submission to MSC Meeting on 19 March 2026)*

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The impact here is in the verification that the DHRP T-PAR approach of multiple layers of participation by young people is an effective way in different national contexts, i.e. that regardless of which of the four countries that implemented the participatory DHRP, the results for individual and community levels appear similar. This indicates that T-PAR as operationalised in the DHRP can be a blueprint for raising rights consciousness among young people.

### Young people as credible actors in governance spaces — a shift in role and recognition

After their participation in the DHRP, several interviewees noted changes not only in their personal knowledge expansion, but also how this knowledge has influenced their outlook on their work, the way they do their work, and how their behaviour within their communities has shifted. In addition, young people gained new access to governance spaces. In Colombia, young people were able to address Congress, as C-CAT member Desiree recounted:

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*"One of the most significant gains the project leaves us as activists is being able to reach a major stage like Congress, to make recommendations on the draft legislation moving in the country, and to present ourselves in that very important space — not each one of us as individuals, but the CAT as an organised group of activists."*

*(Desiree, C-CAT member, FGD conducted 18 March 2026)*

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Desiree's reflection speaks towards the significance of the T-PAR results, which provided CAT members with actionable data that they could use to constructively comment on legislative proposals. It also highlights the community-building that is a positive by-product of the T-PAR-centred approach as conducted in the DHRP. For the DHRP, young people usually conducted advocacy in groups. For example, Timothy Wafula of KELIN described in an interview that five young people were jointly engaged in advocacy for rights-based approaches and how KELIN made sure that a group of young people

was always present in high-level convenings, e.g., with government actors or in international settings, as was outlined in the consortium MOU. Furthermore, Wafula stressed that young people are not merely participants, but take on active roles including as facilitator.<sup>40</sup>

Juliet Nakazibwe of consortium member Restless Development, who was part of a team providing training to CAT members, spoke to the leadership role that young people had taken on in the DHRP during a review of the submitted MSC stories from CAT members. She stated that:

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*"For me, this is the biggest success of the project. It is seeing these young people do actual change in their communities, in their countries, in the advocacy spaces"*

*(Juliet Nakazibwe, Restless Development, 19 March 2026)*

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In a prior written submission to the MSC process, Nakazibwe had expanded on the ways in which young people have taken up space within governance processes. In her reflections she stated the following:

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*"Our work through the DHRP programme has significantly impacted the leadership journeys of the community advisory teams (CATs) we directly support, enabling them to meaningfully participate in programme governance, enhance their leadership skills, and engage in regional and global advocacy spaces. Through our direct support, CAT members have gained confidence to actively contribute in governance meetings such as SteerCo<sup>41</sup>, and many have applied these skills to influence how youth can meaningfully participate in other governance spaces. For example, a CAT member from Vietnam reflected on the power of preparation and how it shaped their participation in SteerCo. This increased youth participation has created opportunities for learning, exposure, and policy influence, allowing community advisory team members to contribute directly to shaping what youth engagement in digital governance spaces could look like. The DHRP programme is clearly responsible for this change because of the programme's youth structures across the 4 countries, training, opportunities and support provided directly enabled these outcomes. This change is significant because it strengthens youth leadership, amplifies their voices in decision-making, and ensures that young people have a meaningful role in shaping digital governance."*

*(Juliet Nakazibwe, written submission to 19 March 2026 MSC meeting)*

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### Individual and collective capacity growth among CAT members

Several quotes have already alluded to individual and collective capacity growth among CAT members. There are many more statements that were made across most interviews that point to the significance that the opportunities provided through the T-PAR had for young people. For example, a V-CAT member observed that after training, members became more confident in running small communications sessions, beginning advocacy conversations, and acting rather than waiting for outside experts to speak for them.<sup>42</sup> CAT members reflected on their personal growth as a significant result of their DHRP participation. K-CAT coordinator Winnie Gift Inganga shared the following in her interview:

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*"My most significant change is my growth. Career-wise, I have grown so much in the past two-and-something years. It has been an amazing experience. I have built my confidence... for me it's the professional growth, the confidence, and the understanding of the digital health space currently."*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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Individual professional growth through acquiring specific skills like for Winnie Gift Inganga was also important to Magda of the C-CAT. She explained what she learned in an FGD, here reproduced in translation from the original Spanish:

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<sup>40</sup> Timothy Wafula, key informant interview, 11 March 2026.

<sup>41</sup> I.e., Steering Committee

<sup>42</sup> V-CAT Thai Nguyen (DHH, KII03) 3 March 2026.

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*"I acquired basic technical and conceptual skills in pedagogical platforms. Two very valuable processes stand out: the construction of the advocacy plan and the construction of the MOOC. Being challenged to write articles, opinion columns, to review texts in a much more academic format – that taught all of us a great deal and gave us additional skills."*

*(Magda C-CAT, FGD conducted 18 March 2026)*

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The interplay between individual upskilling and community power was a significant realisation for Camilo, a member of the C-CAT, who shared the following:

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*"Something I did not previously recognise as such was the value of advocacy, and this project has allowed me to see it: that with this knowledge and experience, if we manage to come together and collectivise, we can reach departmental and municipal levels and influence public policies and draft legislation."*

*(Camilo C-CAT, FGD conducted 18 March 2026)*

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Young people benefitted directly from their participation in the DHRP because they learned new skills through targeted trainings. They also benefitted from working in their collective CATs and through their role within the DHRP governance. They benefitted (in)directly from the raised rights consciousness in their communities. To gain better understanding of how the DHRP participation influenced young people, the consulting team offered CAT members and some consortium members to undertake deeper personal reflections based on a Most-Significant-Change methodology. Below is a brief discussion of what was learned in that process.

#### *Confidence as significant change for young people*

One aspect that underlines several of the above examples of youth leadership is the growth of self-confidence that appears to be an inherent result of the T-PAR. After sharing their anonymised MSC stories with four CAT members from three different countries in a MSC meeting, CAT members in that meeting stated that they recognized their own experiences in one another's stories. While there are not sufficient data points to draw definitive conclusions, this could signify that the stories are identifying a real common pattern of change rather than isolated anecdotes. One written submission to the CAT MSC, reproduced in full in Annex B, illustrates the connection between learning new skills and self-confidence. The submission stated:

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*"I have completely changed how I use the internet. I know how to set up stricter data privacy protections (enabling two-factor authentication; saving evidence when my personal information is stolen online; not blaming myself, etc.), being cautious when sharing sensitive information on health care applications and knowing how to verify health information to avoid misleading or confusing sources... This change helps me feel more confident when integrating into the society's digital transformation. It is not just technical knowledge, but a belief that helps me remove the barriers of fear to access online services for consultation and health care without worrying about privacy violations."*

*(Written submission to CAT MSC meeting on 17 March 2026)*

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The four CAT members' MSC submissions are all similar in the sense that they speak to newly learned skills and increase in confidence, which leads to their ability to move beyond their previous realities. Statements of a newly found increase in confidence appear across all MSC submissions, several key informant interviews, focus group discussions. This appears to indicate two things. First, increased confidence appears to be an overarching significant attainment for young people in the DHRP. Second, the meaning of confidence goes beyond an individual personal achievement to signify confidence became a catalyst for change. The below quote illustrates the trajectory of skills, confidence, and community action:

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*"The most significant change I experienced through my participation in the Digital Health and Rights Project is the development of strong self-confidence and the ability to speak publicly about issues affecting young people in digital spaces. Before joining the project, I often felt hesitant when speaking in public forums or engaging in discussions about digital rights and health issues. However, through the trainings, discussions, and collaborative work with the CAT and researchers, I gradually became more*

*comfortable sharing my views and experiences. Today, I can confidently speak in meetings, community engagements, and advocacy discussions about the challenges young people face online and how these issues affect their health and well-being... This change is significant to me because it has strengthened my ability to contribute meaningfully to my community and to advocate for safer and more inclusive digital environments. I now feel empowered to speak up about digital rights issues, support community awareness activities, and engage with others to promote responsible and safe use of digital technologies. The confidence and knowledge I have gained through the DHRP will continue to influence my work and engagement with community issues beyond the duration of the project."*

*(Written submission to CAT MSC meeting on 17 March 2026)*

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### Comparison of CAT MSC submissions and Vietnam KIIs and FGD

As part of the external evaluation, the evaluation team read the CAT MSC submissions alongside the Vietnam qualitative data collection, which had also included questions to identify the most significant change. Looking for any potential similarities and emerging themes, we found a strong degree of resonance, discussed below. These reflections are not grounded in sufficient data to allow for authoritative inference. However, they do show patterns of likely impact.

Looking at the MSC stories which were submitted by four CAT members from three different countries, the consistency of the underlying change pattern across the different contexts stands out. The stories are not only about gaining knowledge, but about a shift in agency, confidence, and practical capacity to act. Similar experiences are expressed within the Vietnam data. Participants in the FGD and KIIs repeatedly described moving from a passive or vulnerable position into a more proactive one, knowing how to protect themselves online, verify information, support peers, and in some cases respond collectively to digital harms. The Vietnam MSC submission reproduced in Annex B captures both the personal level change and relates it to the community-level through an example of the V-CAT's rapid response to misinformation and stigma.

A second strong point of resonance across MSC submissions and Vietnam data is that the DHRP seems to have been most meaningful where participation became practical and community-grounded, rather than mainly consultative. The Vietnam interview transcripts pronounce V-CAT members not merely as "participants" but contributors to tool refinement, recruitment, communications, interpretation of findings, and community dissemination. They show how the T-PAR approach was deeply embedded in the project structure and governance. That observation aligns with the CAT MSCs where the different ways of participation are described as having deepened confidence, sharpened analysis, and made digital rights work feel more relevant and actionable. From an MSC lens, this suggests that one of the most significant changes with regards to young people and possibly the overall project may be the strengthening of community actors as responders, not only recipients of project activities.

A third convergence is the importance of practical digital protection. In Vietnam, many participants did not speak only in abstract terms about awareness; they described more concrete changes such as checking privacy settings more carefully, verifying health information, recognizing scams, being more cautious about data exposure, and warning others. This resonates strongly with the CAT stories on misinformation, digital rights awareness, safer use of digital spaces, and personal adjustments in online practices. This is noteworthy, because it suggests that the project's value may lie as much in building response capacity as in building knowledge.

There are also some differences worth noting. Compared with the CAT MSCs, the Vietnam data places stronger emphasis on two limitations. First, there is a fairly consistent view that the project built a much stronger foundation for advocacy than actual policy influence. Participants valued the research evidence very highly, but many felt that access to higher-level policy actors remained weak and that structural uptake had not yet reached expectations. This may reflect the small civic space for organizing around human rights, the additional challenge of stigma against structurally excluded populations such as people living with HIV and key populations, as well as that the V-CAT and VNP+ are one of the only organisations working on digital rights. In combination, these factors preclude regular access to high-level government spaces and thus result in the need for a longer timeline for advocacy. Second, several Vietnam participants suggested that the project did a good job preparing capacity, leadership, and readiness, but that there were still limited opportunities to translate this into broader action beyond training, meetings, and community-level dissemination. The MSC stories, however, did not touch on structural change, which may indicate a distinction between meaningful personal- or community-level change and more limited structural change. However, MSC data is too limited to definitively state that structural change was neither present in any of the countries nor seen as significant by the four participants.

## Sustainability

Key evaluation questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ To what extent are the project's results likely to be sustained/continue beyond its duration?</li><li>▪ What changes feel most durable? Which feel most fragile?</li><li>▪ The long-term outcomes include those on widespread participatory research in digital health, national governments strengthening protections, and sustainable participation of young people. What progress was achieved towards achieving these long-term outcomes, and what else needs to be done?</li></ul>
Summary of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ DHRP developed a large repository of research outputs and learning materials for future use in multiple languages.</li><li>▪ Project implementers developed and successfully attracted funding for new digital health and rights projects based on their experience with T-PAR and DHRP consortium</li><li>▪ Long-term sustainability of similar work will in part depend on the availability and direction of international and national funding opportunities, which have seen a significant shift in amount and funding priorities since 2025.</li><li>▪ DHRP fostered significant transformation of skills, confidence levels, and experience with advocacy in young people, which interviewees attested has changed their behaviour and ability to continue similar work in the future.</li></ul>

Sustainability according to OECD-DAC criteria is understood as “the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.”<sup>43</sup> This section of the evaluation report focuses on what evidence the external evaluation found that are indicative that the achieved results and above described impact are likely to continue after the DHRP concludes in May 2026. We are unable to predict the future, however, interviews and experiential data provide data points that support the possibility of continuance, as well as potential barriers.

### Resource constraints as barriers for sustainability

One of the main barriers to additional impact cited in the analysis above is time. Time in this context is understood as a resource bound by grant requirements, i.e. a determined end date and start date that are tied to the availability of financial resources. Funding, therefore, is a determining factor for understanding time as a barrier to project sustainability. Based on the project publications and interviews conducted for this evaluation, DHRP has created a positive foundation for future change, as described by the Steering Committee member from KELIN:

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*“We are at the stage where we wanted to continue to push and engage duty bearers, hold them to account, build the capacity of community based organizations and see how to be able to move that forward in terms of playing now the accountability part, given that the findings are very clear, what the problems are, who's responsible, and how do we move forward. So it's very critical for us to figure out where we'll get funding for that next phase of work.”*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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According to the above and other interviews, the DHRP is well-situated to drive future change. At the time of writing, advocacy efforts were still ongoing and there was resolve among the project implementers, CATs, and young people involved to advance the work. We understand that a shift in donor priorities, not interest in the project topic per se, have determined the exit of the long-term funder of the DHRP. As per the analyses above, the DHRP was highly relevant at its inception and remains highly relevant now, underscored by the findings of the T-PAR. At the same time, the broader global health ecosystem experienced significant shock due to US Government funding cuts and the shuttering of central players in global health with regards to HIV/AIDS, i.e. USAID and PEPFAR, the latter of which remains in operation though with highly limited funding potential. This has caused ripple effects for multilateral funding organisations such as the Global Fund, and individual philanthropic funders.<sup>44</sup> In his interview, Maleche referenced the changing global health landscape as a potential detrimental factor for national government action:

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<sup>43</sup> OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second Edition), OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/632da462-en-fr-es>.

<sup>44</sup> For USAID shut down, see e.g., Cavalcanti D, de Oliveira Ferreira de Sales L, da Silva A et al. (2025). Evaluating the impact of two decades of USAID interventions and projecting the effects of defunding on mortality up to 2030: a retrospective impact evaluation and forecasting analysis. *The Lancet*, 2025; 406, 283-294. For Global Fund, see e.g., Health Policy Watch (2026). Global Fund faces \$5bn shortfall as France slashes support, EU delays pledge. <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/global-fund-shortfall/>; For ongoing issues, see e.g., NPR (2026). Congress gave money for global HIV work. The Trump administration isn't spending it. <https://www.npr.org/2026/04/04/nx-s1-5763938/hiv-aids-pepfar-funding-delays-may-shut-down-lifesaving-aid>

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*"I think the conversation on public health is shifting right now. It's shifting away from a single disease focus, or focusing on diseases in silos, towards integration. So there are big conversations around integration. There are conversations around use of digital technology and rolling that out. There are now concerns in terms of countries entering into bilateral agreements like the US is doing while bypassing the global regulatory systems, say, through WHO or frameworks that have already been agreed upon. And then we have situations where some of those bilateral agreements contain very poorly drafted provisions that would not guarantee safeguarding of data and protection and aspects like that. And then you have countries like Kenya which are desperate to get the funding, because they have got no other place to get the funding for HIV. So irrespective of some of the things that are put [in international frameworks], they are then ending up agreeing to things that may either be detrimental or not even following the procedures that are required to cross check what they are signing."*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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Maleche's quote brings three important aspects into the conversation about sustainability. These are the global move towards disease integration as a driving force in public health conversations and therefore funding direction; the complementary conversation about digital technologies as a vehicle for disease integration; and the potential circumvention of international frameworks and data safety best-practices in correlation to new global health funding realities such as the bilateral MOUs that the U.S. Government has been offering instead of their previous funding strategy. These are strong indications for the need to continue the DHRP with a focused strategy on national and international levels; and to find ways to continue to disseminate the DHRP T-PAR findings and recommendations globally, with strong funding for national government-focused efforts to ensure that human rights and data safety are an integral component in global health.

Expressing a similar need for sustained advocacy around integration of human rights in digitalisation of health, Alistair Shaw of the Global Fund stated that shrinking funding is an opportune entry point for this work:

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*"I would actually offer the converse view, that if funding shrinks, we would see a greater focus on digital systems or digital health than perhaps we would if we had more funding, because... where allocations are reducing, we have to think differently. We have to think about ways to integrate programming. We have to think about ways to deliver healthcare in more creative, more cost-efficient ways that can reach a broader audience. That doesn't mean digital is that method, but it means that digital is part of that discussion. So I do think that we're more likely to see digital investments in these spaces where funding does decrease. Obviously, when that happens and when it happens rapidly, there are risks involved, and the Global Fund Secretariat is trying to mitigate those risks."*

*(Alistair Shaw, Human Rights Advisor, Community, Rights, and Gender Department, Global Fund, interviewed 16 March 2026)*

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Shaw points to the Global Fund's digital framework, which now reflects results from the T-PAR as part of how the Global Fund is planning on mitigating risks to human rights in digitalisation and digital spaces supported by their funding allocations, which will be used by country-facing staff to assess if request for investment in digital health infrastructure is in line with necessary safeguards.

### Knowledge production, dissemination equity, and sustainability

T-PAR is a different way of knowledge production in comparison to traditional academic research and, as described above, values different types of experience, including recognising lived experience as a form of expertise. To institutionalise participatory knowledge production, research and publications produced during the project timeline applied the CLEAR Lab community authorship and attribution approach,<sup>45</sup> which aims to ensure that authorship reflects diverse contributions and is balanced of race, gender, and career stage of co-authors, among others. Dr Bernard Koomson reflected of the significance of employing a T-PAR model for research:

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*"As I said, if it was the University of Warwick doing this in a traditional way, some of these things would never have happened, because this is not my first project I'm working on, and I know how us academics, sometimes we can bulldoze our way through alternatives because of time."*

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<sup>45</sup> See e.g., Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (2025). 'Community Authorship and Attribution in Nunatsiavut: First Steps', <https://civiclaboratory.nl/2025/02/26/community-research-authorship-and-attribution-in-nunatsiavut-first-steps/>  
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Dr Koomson points to a strong benefit of T-PAR that shows why T-PAR can be such a powerful approach. When conducted with adequate time and resources, T-PAR can surface research results and outputs that otherwise may not be discovered.

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*“Our findings did indicate that they [young people] are not only using these technologies just for help. Of course we knew that, but there are other issues of concern that also relates to their rights, and that if those other issues of concern are not addressed, then it means that it's also going to affect their use of those technologies for their health as well. So if you look carefully, look at the title of our reports. It says *Paying the Cost of Connection* so it's not necessarily only centring on health issues, but also issues that they have faced, like, for example, technology facilitated abuse, which came up very strongly in a lack of redress on the form of abuses.”*

(Dr Bernard Koomson, post-graduate research fellow DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026)

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Indeed, well-established human rights practitioners that were part of the DHRP expressed surprise at some of the findings which they had not previously expected nor considered, described in the Impact section [below](#).

Sustainability can also be influenced by who has access to research results. The DHRP had an existing online publications library prior to the grant period under review. The T-PAR process has contributed to the expansion of the number of items available via said platform, as well as the types of publications available. The variety in type of knowledge products include journal articles (with ten in process for journal publication at handover of this report), research reports (three published), thematic briefs (eight published or in process), country briefs i.e. concise location-focused versions of longer research reports, blog posts, webinars and accompanying video recordings, podcasts, documentation of physical campaigns, guidelines and reports by global institutions, and workshop toolkits.<sup>46</sup> The library now also includes a link to the recently published massive open online course (MOOC) available on the internationally-used online learning platform Coursera.<sup>47</sup> Vallerie Khamati, the communications working group lead based with KELIN in Kenya, had this to say about the online learning launch:

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*“The biggest deal has been the MOOC, the online course on Coursera, that was launched in English just a few days ago. I think that's a big deal for me and for communities as well. ... The MOOC is a sustaining factor because it provides information and people can enrol in the course for free. And I stress free because digital platforms are quite expensive, so people have to pay in different contexts. So if people have to pay and then pay for internet [access], it becomes unsustainable. But this is a free platform, all they need is internet and they are gaining lots of information. That is a big deal”*

(Vallerie Khamati, DHRP communications working group lead, KELIN, interviewed 9 March 2026.)

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In her interview, Vallerie Khamati made an important point in the context of accessibility and sustainability, i.e. the fact that the MOOC is available free of charge, which provides access to an educational curriculum on digital health and human rights regardless of financial means, which is an important factor to the ability of young people who are limited in their financial power and the income disparities between (as well as within) different countries across the world. The online learning course will be available in Spanish as well, opening the available learning potential to a much larger number of people globally. Free availability of self-paced educational tools in multiple languages is one component of potential sustainability.

A similar sentiment was shared by Winnie Gift Inganga, the K-CAT coordinator, who analysed the importance of these knowledge products, the ways in which they have already been applied during the grant period, and how she expects they will be utilised in the future as thus:

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*“What is most likely to last is, I think, the sensitization and awareness [that] even continue from the trickle down. Whoever was empowered is going to empower another person. That one I know will last.”*

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<sup>46</sup> Digital Health & Rights Project. Our Publications. <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/our-library/>

<sup>47</sup> Universidad de los Andes (2026). MOOC “Rights and Health in the Digital Age: Protection and Advocacy”. <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/news-and-blog/mooc-rights-and-health-in-the-digital-age-protection-and-advocacy/>

*Something else that I feel will last is digital literacy, because we have a MOOC. The DHRP has a MOOC course that it was able to develop. I think that one is on Coursera, that one will always be there.”*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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Evaluation interviews surfaced the important point of equity in knowledge product distribution, highlighting a central component of the T-PAR approach. A knowledge product can only become sustainable if it is available, accessible, acceptable, and of quality (co-incidentally the attributes to realise the right to health). These considerations were part of the DHRP communications strategy, as described in the below deliberation of sustainability by Khamati:

*“The least sustainable depending on the target audience, would be the big research reports. If we, as the comms working group, are not able to break them down into consumable pieces, it will remain [accessible] for a certain category of stakeholders. That’s probably the World Health Organization, which is a good target within the DHRP, but it may not necessarily cascade to non-academic audiences. What has helped is the development of the different policy briefs, because they are slim, they are sharp, straight to the point. I think the policy briefs are another sustaining factor.”*

*(Vallerie Khamati, DHRP communications working group lead, KELIN, interviewed 9 March 2026)*

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Therefore, the produced variety of knowledge products was a dedicated strategy of the DHRP, which aimed to invoke long-term changes for different stakeholders, including national and international institutions, young people affected by HIV, and academic audiences.

A tangible example of how the T-PAR research and its results will live beyond the project duration is a checklist requested by Alistair Shaw, Human Rights Advisor, Community, Rights and Gender Department at the Global Fund. This checklist is the clearest illustration in the entire dataset of a knowledge product being *actively used* within an institutional workflow. According to Shaw, the DHRP team developed the checklist based on his expressed request:

*“The checklist would be maybe an outlier, because it’s one that I specifically requested of STOPAIDS as part of DHRP. So I believe they developed it because of my request. ... We only just launched our new grant cycle on Friday, so we haven’t had an opportunity to use it yet, but it’s something that we are starting to make available to colleagues across the [Global Fund] Secretariat, so that when it comes time to review our funding requests, everyone knows that that tool can be applied.”*

*(Alistair Shaw, Human Rights Advisor, Community, Rights, and Gender Department, Global Fund, interviewed 16 March 2026)*

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This is an expansion on the impact described in the sections above, where we referenced Shaw on how the longstanding, productive relationship between the Global Fund and DHRP consortium members was a driving point for the DHRP’s ability to grow conversations on digitalisation, health, and human rights in a multilateral funding institution; and how speed in digitalisation requires more safeguarding measures.

### Research outputs as durable assets

The applicability of research outputs is one of the hallmarks of T-PAR. Several interviewees pointed to the research and its results as a durable asset with long-lasting validity. Timothy Wafula, program coordinator for DHRP at KELIN in Kenya described the research report as a reference document with recommendations that are relevant to others in the field of health and digitalisation. Wafula referenced work from the two prior DHRP grants and how the outputs from those project cycles remained useful in the context of the project under review:

*“In the second project, we’d supported the UN Special Rapporteur [on the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health] to develop a thematic report. In the first phase, we did some limited research more focused on SRHR and young people, so we also had findings and recommendations there. We could already see the trends and we could already speak to the gaps. I*

*think now using our work with the young people, especially the CATs, also ensures that this conversation is ongoing."*

*(Timothy Wafula, Programme Manager, KELIN, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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Wafula points to the durability of the research, which should be further strengthened once the peer reviewed article currently in the review process will be published. Furthermore, Wafula commented on the potential of consortium members continuing to utilise the recommendations and research in their scope of work. In support of this, several interviewees pointed to the number of social science articles and comparative legal analyses, with more currently still in development or in the academic publishing process.<sup>48</sup>

Winnie Gift Inganga pointed to the validity of the information as an achievement with long-term relevance for several different thematic areas:

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*"[B]eing able to rely on evidence-based findings, and being able to say, if you want to go into policy work, you can always use this document; if you are in the health space, or the gender space, or the IT space, you can always rely on this work. Also in terms of if you want to do any project related to young people, you can also always rely on this report as an area of importance for young people. And I think another area is in advocacy... I think that the document is going to be very, very important and useful in many, many, many years to come."*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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Inganga's interpretation that the T-PAR findings are applicable for a variety of thematic concentrations was confirmed in other interviews, e.g. by Shaw of the Global Fund, who mentioned the research with regards to the Global Fund's work on gender and access to justice, and the broader work on right to privacy by Privacy International. Dr Koomson reflected in his interview, that his understanding of the applicability of the research findings expanded over the course of the project:

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*"I kind of had a sense of the fact that human rights are not really necessarily applicable only within a physical environment, but are also relevant on digital devices, especially because that's also a community, and that's kind of my understanding as a sociologist as well. So what I would say, what was quite new to me was the DHRP expansion of the concept of, say, digital health, which is not restrictive to specific technologies or technologies designed to promote, give access to people in terms of health, but an extension to how people use digital devices to search out health information, discuss health information and their focus specifically on digital social spaces, social media like Facebook, Twitter, whichever one is popular in any of these contexts that we've studied and how younger adults are repurposing all of these digital devices to advance health. So that's the new conceptual understanding that this project produced."*

*(Dr Bernard Koomson, post-graduate research fellow DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026)*

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The T-PAR has led to other collaborations that point to future use of research results and continuation of the T-PAR approach as an important tool in digital health. Derrick Muneene of the Data, Digital Health, Analytics and AI (DDA) Department at the WHO pointed to a newly established partnership with University of Warwick, where the DHRP was hosted.

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*"We have created an MOU now with the university for the long term. The MOU would not have come to play if the contributions were not meaningful. The contributions have been constructive and meaningful ... as the project is ending, the work is continuing through this MOU between WHO and Warwick University."*

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<sup>48</sup> See e.g., Allan Maleche, KELIN, 11 March 2026

This is an example not only of the impact of the project, which aimed to influence national and global decision-making bodies. It also reflects on the multiple applications that the research outputs can take and the broad variety of stakeholders that benefit from this kind of information. Muneene continued to explain that the DHRP research outputs will influence the next decade of WHO thinking on digital health:

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*"We will be using the learnings from the programme to inform the work plan that takes us until 2035. The WSIS<sup>49</sup> mechanism is really the highest mechanism in terms of implementation of digital health, because it comes from the UN resolution itself – and we will be ensuring that the issue of rights, gender and equity is included within our WSIS roadmap."*

(Derrick Muneene, WHO, interviewed 16 March 2026)

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The sustainability of research outputs is promising in terms of applicability, use, and appetite for this type of information. Broader factors such as funding availability for the strategic advocacy work needed to ensure frameworks that include DHRP recommendations are not just developed but also implemented will come into play.

#### Initiation of new projects by project implementers

Consortium members have not only experienced shifts in beliefs and practice; they have already developed and in some cases received funding for new projects that were inspired by their learnings from the DHRP. Vallerie Khamati, for example, expressed interest in following the trajectory of the advocacy and the T-PAR findings for several years to understand what new ideas people develop based on their interaction with this information.

However, the evaluation team learned of at least four new projects or collaborations that are already underway. Below are examples from Restless Development in Uganda, and from a part-time Restless Development staff in Costa Rica who introduced DHRP learning into another field. In a written submission to a MSC meeting in the external evaluation process, Juliet Nakazibwe reflected how Restless Development's participation in the DHRP consortium has opened a new area for their organisation. She wrote:

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*"At an organisational level, this programme grounded our programming in digital transformation beyond the use of digital tools in our work, pushing us to look more intentionally at the experiences of young people in digital transformation. We now know that we can leverage our experiences from the DHRP programme, especially the training resources we have developed, to scale up our work on digital transformations and the use of AI. We have just rolled out research on Artificial Intelligence in collaboration with the University of Cambridge and Makerere University, which aims to understand how young people aged 18–35 use AI, with findings that will be used to advance research, improve programmes, and inform policymakers about what young people want and need from AI. We are also exploring a partnership with CIPESA as the lead convenor for the Forum for Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFA) to collaborate on strengthening the meaningful participation of young people in digital governance spaces like FIFA. Overall, this programme has grounded our expertise in digital health and rights and we are keen and already taking action and exploring partnership to further our ambitions in this area."*

(Juliet Nakazibwe, Restless Development, written submission to MSC meeting, 19 March 2026.)

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According to Nakazibwe, Restless Development has already applied two aspects of the DHRP into new programming. First, application of training materials developed through work in the DHRP to the area of artificial intelligence. Second, bringing the participatory approach from the T-PAR and advocacy into a new multilateral space.

The third example of new work that was initiated based on DHRP participation is in the field of art and gender. Jimena Cascante Matamoros held a part time position with RD for the DHRP. In the third MSC meeting, she expanded on who her participation in DHRP gave her the impetus to bring aspects from her experience there into her other work:

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<sup>49</sup> World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). For more information see e.g., <https://www.unesco.org/en/wsis>

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*"I'm a part of a queer collective in Costa Rica, and digital rights was never something that we had worked on. We mostly focus our work on art and working with queer artists. But since being in this project, we got the opportunity to start working on digital rights as well within our work, and because I knew how much impact it can have in our lives, because of knowing the abuse that is happening in other places, I really pushed for us to also focus on this work, and so now in our collective we actually have a grant to work on digital rights, which wouldn't have been something that we would have cared for before, because we couldn't really see how it connected to our activism. But now I can see that."*

*(Jimena Cascante Matamoros, Restless Development, MSC meeting, 19 March 2026.)*

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As other interviewees highlighted in this and the above section on changes in belief and practice, the DHRP not only provided Cascante Matamoros with new knowledge. It also instilled in her the resolve to act upon her new knowledge and bring others into the work on digital rights.

Dr Koomson offered an additional perspective of how sustainability in the context of T-PAR can be understood:

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*"I would say that there is strength in collaboration and robustness in collaborating with likeminded people and organizations to conduct research and use the findings for action, because obviously we have learned a lot from our civil society colleagues in as much as they have also learned from us as well, based personally from my formal and informal engagement with colleagues. Sustainability? That's a very, very difficult question to answer, but I think for us as organizational collaborators, we may not get to have the luxury of 5.3 million pounds in future, but in our individual future work in terms of research advocacy, it will be useful to model this approach, whether in miniature forms or embedded forms, and open the doors to very, very good stakeholders or collaborators in our countries. Sustainability should start from us after the closeout, how we take the lessons and model before other duty bearers or grant making organizations. What they want to do with their money, obviously, we cannot decide for them, but I think we should first examine sustainability from in-house before we think of something like this happening again, because it may not, depending on the way the grant landscape is. I think we also have to, irrespective of where we may end up,"*

*(Dr Bertrand Koomson, post-doctoral research fellow with DHRP, interviewed 12 March 2026)*

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### **T-PAR as vehicle for young people developing into champions of future change**

As discussed in the impact section above, new confidence leading to new action and behaviours appears to be a significant impact of the DHRP for many people that have been involved in project implementation, not least for the young people that were part of the CATs. The external evaluation deployed a limited MSC exercise to aid CAT members in reflecting more deeply on what their participation has meant for themselves and their communities. We present here a short reflection of overarching findings from MSC with CAT members in relation with consortium member reflections.

From among the implementing partners that responded either in writing or in a key informant interview about the most significant result of the DHRP for them personally, the answers were predominantly related to the CATs. Several people commented on the fact that the CATs remained active throughout the DHRP and hold great potential for continuation of the work. Allan Maleche of KELIN reflected on the impact that CAT members may continue to have:

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*"My biggest result is the setup of the community advisory teams. I think for me, that's my biggest achievement, and the biggest thing. We found a group of young people who are in different stages of their professions, their career, their community work. We brought them together, and we were able to work with them on a platform that ensured they got to be involved in research, to advise it, to write around it, and to be able to advocate around it. I think for me, that makes me realize I have a number of champions around Colombia, Kenya, Ghana and Vietnam that I can turn to in the future. These are people the project has invested in, and they're going to leave a legacy around these particular issues. "*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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The same wish for staying part of similar work, as Maleche shared above, was expressed by Winnie Gift Inganga, who coordinated the K-CAT. In her interview, she talked about the four CATs staying in touch and potential future collaboration:

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*"One thing I can say is, as the CATs we are still we are going to be together even post-research, and we will just be like an advisory board. So if we ever get opportunities to apply for grants to do participatory action research within digital health and rights, I would be happy to do that."*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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Her response is significant for assessing the sustainability of DHRP results, because it indicates potential for the longevity of established relationships across the four participating countries, as well as the hope to continue in this line of work. One of the reasons why the CAT members interviewed for this evaluation were so steadfast in their opinion on being involved in more work on digital health and rights, appears to be the significant sense of confidence that they have developed throughout their participation in the DHRP. After reading some of the MSC submissions, Juliet Nakazibwe, who worked with the CATs throughout the DHRP, reflected on the importance of gleaning this type of data. She stated that she had made,

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*"The recognition of the individual level of change that is realized through advocacy initiatives that are usually overlooked by the MEL system. You may find that even in our DHRP framework, we don't have a number of indicators really trying to investigate and understand how this program has impacted the individual lives of the young leaders, the Community Advisory Teams. And yet we do appreciate that it is the skills, the networks, the additional knowledge they gain through this experience that will live on after the end of the program that would enable them to continue being the champions and the voices advocating for these issues in the different spaces."*

*(Juliet Nakazibwe, Restless Development, interviewed 19 March 2026)*

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Nakazibwe appears to be saying that there is a feedback loop between skills building, participation in research, community-building, and advocacy that in combination impacts young people to the extent that they take up leadership roles in advocating for their communities. Indeed, the most significant change that CAT members overwhelmingly pointed to, as described above, was the marked change in their personal confidence that they developed through their participation in the DHRP. Confidence is challenging to measure in a short external evaluation such as this. However, the fact is that most young people who participated in the MSC determined that confidence was their most significant change, without receiving any prompt or definition of 'significant' nor 'change'. Likely, the availability of some subgrants allowed CAT members to translate their knowledge into practice at the community level and this area is worthy of further inquiry.

See a selection of full MSC statements in the [Annex](#).

Importantly, none of the interviewees questioned whether the work of the DHRP should continue. Interviewees generally pointed out areas that they expected to continue implementing. Considering that the DHRP was founded and began implementation of activities without dedicated funding, the current situation is favourable to see continuation of the DHRP strategy. Funding availability will determine the priority and speed with which the DHRP will progress towards the long-term outcomes. However, absence of dedicated grants are unlikely to mean an end of the DHRP.

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## Lessons Learned

### ***Lesson 1: A T-PAR approach is core to achieving outcomes, including participants taking leadership roles in advocacy***

The innovative nature of the T-PAR approach as implemented in the DHRP created advocates and leaders among the young populations directly involved in the research – with many CAT members recognised as experts on digital health and rights and motivated to continue advocacy beyond the lifetime of the project. T-PAR in DHRP included community leadership embedded in the project governance structure with community representation on the Steering Committee, field study exchanges to build expertise in country contexts across borders, collaborative authorship of knowledge outputs, and subgrants for national project activities based on research findings. Additionally, CAT involvement meant that research results were considered to be more authentic and truly contextualised.

### ***Lesson 2: An anti-oppression framework, while necessary and useful, must be consistently operationalised even at the institutional level to ensure smooth execution and true inclusion***

The DHRP project developed an Anti-Oppression Framework (AOF) that was useful and referenced throughout the project. Tensions and power asymmetries still arose, including due to practical realities of a Global North academic institution holding and disbursing funds. A university that insists on its substantial bureaucratic and administrative procedures when engaging with civil society organisations and Global South partners can create impasse and strenuous barriers when those requirements are not practical nor financially or otherwise attainable for civil society organisations.. This raises questions whether university-based institutionalism and academic standards are compatible and consistent with anti-oppression frameworks. Academic institutions and large organisations should be review how their procedures and policies may stand in the way of innovation and be open to adapt their requirements to facilitate stronger, more effective, efficient, and impactful partnerships with civil society and Global South organisations. Institutional leadership should sensitise and be sensitised to anti-oppression frameworks.

### ***Lesson 3: Innovative participatory approaches within traditional frameworks require time and flexibility***

T-PAR was almost universally lauded as being necessary to ensure community leadership and as increasing the veracity of research findings. To facilitate an effective and efficient T-PAR project consortium partners should develop a governance system and approval processes that enshrine flexibility to ensure processes remain agile and not burdensome to various implementers. This should include regular assessment of which processes support and which hinder a productive workflow, while understanding that productivity is not solely measured by speed.

### ***Lesson 4: Translation and linguistic equity must be budgeted as core project costs, not supplementary line items***

Across the consortium, translation and language access were systematically under-resourced.. Further efforts to raise support for translation were unsuccessful. Future projects of this nature should calculate translation costs from the outset, at realistic market rates and across all anticipated outputs, and treat linguistic equity as a non-negotiable design principle rather than an aspiration subject to available funds.

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## Conclusion

The DHRP set out to demonstrate that transnational participatory action research (T-PAR) could generate rigorous, community-rooted evidence on digital health and rights, and use that evidence to shift norms and practice at the national and global levels. On the strength of this evaluation, it has succeeded in that ambition to a meaningful degree - more than could reasonably have been expected within three years, in four countries, under conditions of significant external disruption.

The project's most durable contributions are not confined to any single output. They are embedded in the people it developed: CAT members who now speak before legislatures, moderate international conference sessions, sit on UN advisory groups, and describe themselves as having shifted from beneficiaries to leaders. They are in the process of being embedded in institutions, such as the WHO's Global Digital Health Strategy and the Global Fund's modular framework. And they are embedded in a body of peer-reviewed, community-validated research that will outlast the consortium that produced it.

Based on the evaluation data, the DHRP project period under review was successful in reaching most of the goals that the consortium had set for itself. It constitutes important experiential data on the potential of T-PAR for research and advocacy innovation. The challenges surfaced through this inquiry constitute relevant learning points for the development and implementation of similar projects in the future.

The DHRP expanded the practice of T-PAR by including mentoring for civil society and other early career researchers across the national partners, with support for them to conduct field study exchanges, lead publications, and present to academic meetings. It also applied the community authorship and attribution approach developed by the CLEAR lab, which aims to ensure that authorship reflects diverse contributions and is balanced for equity based on race, gender, career stage among others.<sup>50</sup>

Many of the participants quoted across this evaluation report expressed appreciation for the T-PAR approach and in fact would have appreciated the opportunity to expand beyond what the project was able to achieve with the available funding.

Some challenges arose from the continuous nature of the DHRP with T-PAR expanding knowledge and therefore the potential for advocacy, meaning that the advocacy strategy developed by the DHRP Advocacy Working Group was not linear and equally required expansion, which challenged the limitations of the available funding.

The DHRP illustrates different steps that can be taken towards addressing power dynamics, such as the MOU requirement that public speaking representation by anyone in the consortium must include someone from the national teams. CAT representatives participated in and self-selected for speaking engagement with dedicated support from Restless Development. This has included flying young CAT representative into Geneva to meet with e.g., WHO representatives repeatedly.

The project was not without its structural tensions. At the same time, power imbalances were noted in the project, which is useful as basis for future development of the T-PAR approach. Future iterations of the DHRP may want to consider how the central role of a Global North academic institution as funding manager and principal recipient reinforces inequalities, despite the mitigation measures evident in e.g., the Steering Committee structure and it was still a persistent dynamic. Power asymmetries within the consortium were never fully resolved, and the concentration of grant-holding at a single institution created perceived and practical frictions that the anti-oppression framework, while valuable, could not entirely counteract. Translation remained chronically under-resourced. The perceived (by some) advocacy-research sequencing created a compressed window for national-level impact that was further narrowed by external shocks - the US funding cuts, Ghana's anti-LGBTQI legislation, Vietnam's administrative restructuring - none of which were within the consortium's control.

What the DHRP demonstrates, above all, is that participatory action research in digital health and rights is not only possible but necessary. The communities most affected by the rapid digitalization of global health are also the communities least represented in its governance. This project created space for those communities to speak, to be heard, and increasingly, to lead. That is a contribution that no single evaluation can fully measure, but that this evaluation finds to be both real and consequential.



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<sup>50</sup> Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (2025). Community Research, Authorship and Attribution in Nunatsiavut: First Steps. <https://civiclaboratory.nl/2025/02/26/community-research-authorship-and-attribution-in-nunatsiavut-first-steps/>

## Annex

### A: Country Case Studies and Snapshots

#### Colombia

##### Key Publications

- Digital Health and Rights Project Consortium, 2024, The digital transformation and the right to health of young adults in Bangladesh and Colombia: A community-engaged study. Health and Human Rights Journal 12.
- Guerrero-C, Mjwana, Leon-Giraldo et al, 2024, "Brave global spaces: Researching digital health and human rights through transnational participatory action research." Journal of Responsible Technology 20. [Link](#)
- Digitalisation, health, and participation (Colombia, 2024) [Link](#)
- Davis, Koomson, Gonzalez-Uribe, Maleche, "Online Abuse Is Undermining the Right to Health" Global Health Now (22 May 2025) [Link](#)
- Andrés Camilo Restrepo Mora, "Viaje a RightsCon2025" Blog, Restless Development (10 April 2025) [Link](#)
- Universidad de los Andes and COLEV, "Digital Health and Rights in Bangladesh and Colombia" (August 2022) accessed 31 March 2026. [Link](#)

##### Introduction and Context

Colombia is a country of 53.8 million people bordered by Venezuela in the east, Brazil in the southeast, Peru in the south, Ecuador in the southwest, and Panama in the northwest. The country has had increasing digital penetration, with the penetration rate for mobile internet being 64.4 per 100 inhabitants, increasing 5.5% with respect to the same period of 2020.<sup>51</sup> This is a moderate-to-high rate of mobile penetration, only below Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay in the Latin America region. A July 2022 report illustrates an urban-rural digital divide, with an area of the country more focused on agriculture and livestock having lower levels of digital skills than the capital of Bogotá.<sup>52</sup>

In terms of digital health and rights protections, the country has a written Constitution which obligates the State to respect rights and freedoms, including reproductive rights. Decree 2968, 2010 created the National Intersectoral Commission for the Promotion and Guarantee of Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Additionally, Statutory Law 1581, 2012<sup>154</sup> regulates the general provisions for privacy, personal data protection, and Habeas Data in Colombia, essentially regulating the constitutional right of all individuals to know, update, and rectify information collected about them in databases and files, as well as the right to access information more broadly.<sup>53</sup> More recently, the Colombian Congress has debated a new Digital Violence Bill (No. 359 of 2025 / 247 of 2024), the public hearings of which the Colombia Community Advisory Team participated in.

Structurally excluded populations such as transgender communities and people living with HIV face abuse and violence, both online and offline. According to an Ombudsman's report, 98 people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities were killed between 2020 and 2021.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, an article published on Global Health Now co-authored by DHRP implementers including Catalina Gonzalez-Uribe from Uni de los Andes (UniAndes) found that "transgender sex workers were stalked to their homes after their details were shared online without consent."<sup>55</sup>

UniAndes have been involved in the DHRP since 2022, with support from two grants from Open Society University Network hosted by the Geneva Graduate Institute. The UniAndes team collaborated in a broader study with DHRP

<sup>51</sup> Universidad de los Andes and COLEV, "Digital Health and Rights in Bangladesh and Colombia" (August 2022) <<https://colev.uniandes.edu.co/images/documentos/IP-DRAG-Bangladesh-Colombia-FINAL.pdf>> accessed 31 March 2026

<sup>52</sup> Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicaciones. Encuesta de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones en Hogares (2021). Available at: [https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/entic/bol\\_entic\\_hogares\\_2021.pdf](https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/entic/bol_entic_hogares_2021.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Universidad de los Andes and COLEV, "Digital Health and Rights in Bangladesh and Colombia" (August 2022) <<https://colev.uniandes.edu.co/images/documentos/IP-DRAG-Bangladesh-Colombia-FINAL.pdf>> accessed 31 March 2026

<sup>54</sup> Colombian Ombudsman. "Entre 2020 y 2021, asesinaron a 98 personas con orientación sexual e identidad de género diversas," June 25, 2021: <https://www.defensoria.gov.co/es/nube/comunicados/10218/Entre-2020-y-2021-asesinaron-a-98-personas-con-orientacion-C3%B3n-sexual-e-identidad-de-g-C3%A9nero-diversas-OSIGD-dEFENSOR-C3%8DA.html>

<sup>55</sup> Davis, Koomson, Gonzalez-Uribe, Maleche, "Online Abuse Is Undermining the Right to Health" Global Health Now (22 May 2025) <https://globalhealthnow.org/2025-05/online-abuse-undermining-right-health> accessed 31 March 2026

and worked together with the BRAC University in Bangladesh<sup>56</sup> to conduct community-engaged research into digital health and rights in both countries, prior to 2023. As part of this study, UniAndes conducted 6 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 26 young people (aged 18-30) in Bogota and Medellin, including some openly living with HIV; 18 individual interviews with selected young adults, including transgender women; and 14 key informant interviews with HIV activists and community leaders representing transgender people living with HIV and women living with HIV. Findings included that young adults preferred to seek health information from youth-friendly content creators on social media rather than in formal health systems, due to conservative social norms that prevail within clinics. This was particularly prevalent for transgender youth. The interviewees also highlighted concerns about the credibility of online health information, and of bullying faced while accessing health information online.<sup>57</sup>

### Programme and Evaluation Findings

Research during this Botnar III grant has involved focus group discussions conducted among 60 young people aged 18-30,<sup>58</sup> with 55% (N=33) identifying as female, 20% (N=12) identifying as male, 23% (N = 14) identifying as transgender, and 2% (N=1) identifying as non-binary, per below data. At time of writing, according to Catalina Gonzales-Uribe, Principal Investigator for UniAndes, research articles are underway. Findings from M&E reports, however, show that the project has had extensive media engagement, with 8 media publications and one interview conducted in Year 1 of the project, with one article in Global Health Now describing how “transgender sex workers were stalked to their homes after their details were shared online without consent.”<sup>59</sup>

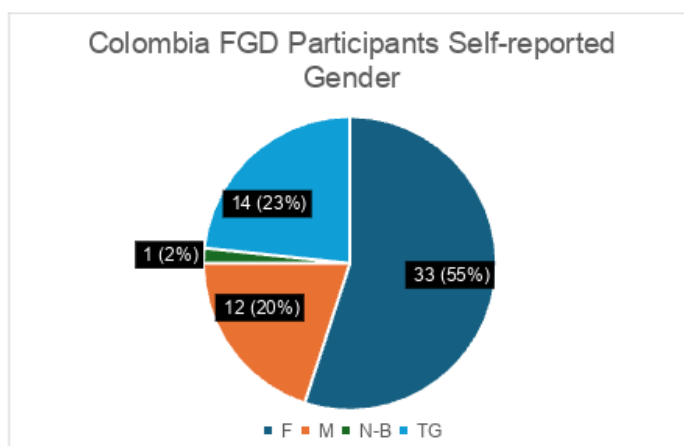


Figure 3: Colombia FGD participants - self-reported gender

Participatory research and community engagement has been particularly notable within this project, with interviewees noting how CAT members have significantly influenced not just the results of the project but have touched the lives of the academics at UniAndes. In the words of Catalina Gonzalez-Uribe, Principal Investigator:

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*“There’s the way (in which) the CAT members have touched our lives and been touched by our lives. I’ve worked with communities before, but here (in this project) I had the community with me from almost day one – from month six (of the project) to the very last day, the distance of an instant chat. That changes the dynamic (as compared to conducting research extractively). If I need something, I have I have a chat with the entire (community) advisory group, everyone’s there. That is a very different way of doing research because (usually), I have to fly out of Bogotá, arrive, meet with (communities), talk, and tell them I’ll be back in six months. (In this project), we have a direct channel of communication and that’s a different way of doing research.”*

<sup>56</sup> Guerrero-C, Mjwana, Leon-Giraldo et al, 2024, “Brave global spaces: Researching digital health and human rights through transnational participatory action research.” Journal of Responsible Technology 20, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrt.2024.100097>

<sup>57</sup> Digital Health And Rights Project Consortium, The Digital Transformation and the Right to Health of Young Adults in Bangladesh and Colombia: A Community-Engaged Study (2024) 26(2) <<https://www.hhrjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/12/digital-health-1.pdf>> accessed 6 May 2026

<sup>58</sup> Demographic Data and Graphs, internal document, Botnar III

<sup>59</sup> Davis, Koomson, Gonzalez-Uribe, Maleche, “Online Abuse Is Undermining the Right to Health” Global Health Now (22 May 2025) <https://globalhealthnow.org/2025-05/online-abuse-undermining-right-health> accessed 31 March 2026

*(Catalina Gonzalez-Uribe, Principal Investigator for UniAndes, interviewed 18 March 2025)*

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Community Advisory Group members echoed this sentiment. Cindy Marcela Zapata, C-CAT member, made a compelling argument for the participatory research methodology and the value that community expertise has in improving the scientific data:

*"I have always placed great value on the topic of participatory action and the fact that this project thought through a strategy that includes community experiences so that they strengthen the creation of scientific knowledge - that gives great value to our experiences, including from street-level work. It is a way to recognise our knowledge. It is commonly considered that what is scientific is only created by academy, but what we have created here from within social leadership - that lends the findings a weight, a rigour, a significant breadth. Of course there is important knowledge from a researcher. But when that comes together with the knowledge of the populations – that absolutely enriches the result. What the people from Antioquia like to eat is different to what people in Bogotá like to eat (circumstances and experiences are different in different cities) - that knowledge is ours, and it becomes relevant information for the creation of academic knowledge."*

*(Cindy Marcela Zapata, C-CAT member, FGD conducted 18 March 2026)*

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C-CAT members also participated in multiple national and global level processes. At the national level, Camila Gil spoke at several Congressional public hearings, including public hearings for the discussion of a Digital Violence Bill (No. 359 of 2025 / 247 of 2024).<sup>60</sup> The experience gained from the DHRP directly benefited C-CAT members in their other roles. As Camila Gil illustrates:

*"I'm currently also part of the UN Women advisory group advising on digital issues, and this project is exactly what gave me the tools (to speak on digital rights). I was on the UN Women podcast with a journalist here in Colombia called María Jimena Usani, and all of that was driven by the tools the project gave me to speak and to shine a light on (issues faced in the digital spaces)."*

*(Camila Gil, Colombia C-CAT member, interviewed 17 March 2026)*

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In February 2025, a member of the Colombia Community Advisory Team, **Andrés Camilo**, attended RightsCon25 - the premier international forum for human rights in digital spaces. He subsequently wrote a blogpost detailing his experiences, including that he represented Putumayo in Southern Colombia, and reflecting upon key themes including rural connectivity, gender-based digital violence, and LGBTIQ+ resistance, framing his participation as an opportunity to bring new ideas back to Latin America and to his home territory.<sup>61</sup> There were numerous other sessions where C-CAT members shared their experiences. **Bicky Bohorquez** participated in the *Latin America and Caribbean Internet Governance Forum (LACIGF)*, held in Santiago de Chile from 5-8 November 2025 as a panelist. **Fernande Alvarez** took part in the *World Data Forum*, held in Medellín from 12-15 November 2025 as a panelist in a session titled "Co-creating Data Action in the Digital Age: Learnings from Global Community Activists on How to Promote Fairer, More Inclusive, and Accountable Data Practices". Alvarez then went on to participate at the World Health Assembly in Geneva, representing the C-CAT. **Camila Gil** took part in the *Cumbre Latinoamericana de Defensoras Digitales* en Ciudad de México, February 24-26, 2025, and this was later promoted via a LinkedIn post featuring Gil talking about the need for 'a life free from violence in digital spaces'.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Canal Comisión Primera Cámara de Representantes, Audiencia Pública - Proyecto de Ley No. 359 de 2025 Cámara - 247 de 2024 Senado (24 November 2025) <https://www.youtube.com/live/6FP55RApANM> accessed 31 March 2026

<sup>61</sup> Andrés Camilo Restrepo Mora, "Viaje a RightsCon2025" Blog, Restless Development (10 April 2025) [Link](#)

<sup>62</sup> María Camila Moreno Gil, LinkedIn (2025) [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mariacamilamorenogil\\_primera-cumbre-latinoamericana-de-defensoras-activity-7300253590714003456-wJSU?utm\\_source=social\\_share\\_send&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop\\_web&rcm=ACoAAAYMC4BohuZoMsiQ\\_vN8\\_IOWevqgtc\\_Uoc8](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mariacamilamorenogil_primera-cumbre-latinoamericana-de-defensoras-activity-7300253590714003456-wJSU?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=member_desktop_web&rcm=ACoAAAYMC4BohuZoMsiQ_vN8_IOWevqgtc_Uoc8)

In addition to these international fora, Sebastián León-Giraldo, Associate Professor at UniAndes, met with the Colombian ambassador to the United Nations during the Summit for the Future on 22nd September 2025, and Cindy Sanchez meeting the Vice Minister of Health of Colombia during the World Health Assembly in May 2025, both communicating key findings and asks from the project.<sup>63</sup> A truncated longitudinal timeline of events is presented in **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

#### Summary of Key Findings

- C-CAT members participated in three public Congressional hearings, including in one to discuss the proposed Digital Violence Bill (No. 359 of 2025 / 247 of 2024)
- Interviews with C-CAT members showed genuine community participation and co-design in research, advocacy, and knowledge outputs. C-CAT members felt that their knowledge was genuinely valued and improved the weight and breadth of the scientific outcomes. Multiple C-CAT members were represented at national and international events, showing meaningful distribution of expertise and selection.
- A bilingual Spanish and English MOOC on digital health and rights was launched on Coursera, and will continue to be accessible beyond the lifetime of the project
- Knowledge gained in the DHRP benefited C-CAT members in other spaces, and resulted in a robust, meaningful and mutually relationship with academic partners.

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<sup>63</sup> Botnar 3 Reporting Template, UniAndes, Reporting Period: June 2024 – May 2025)

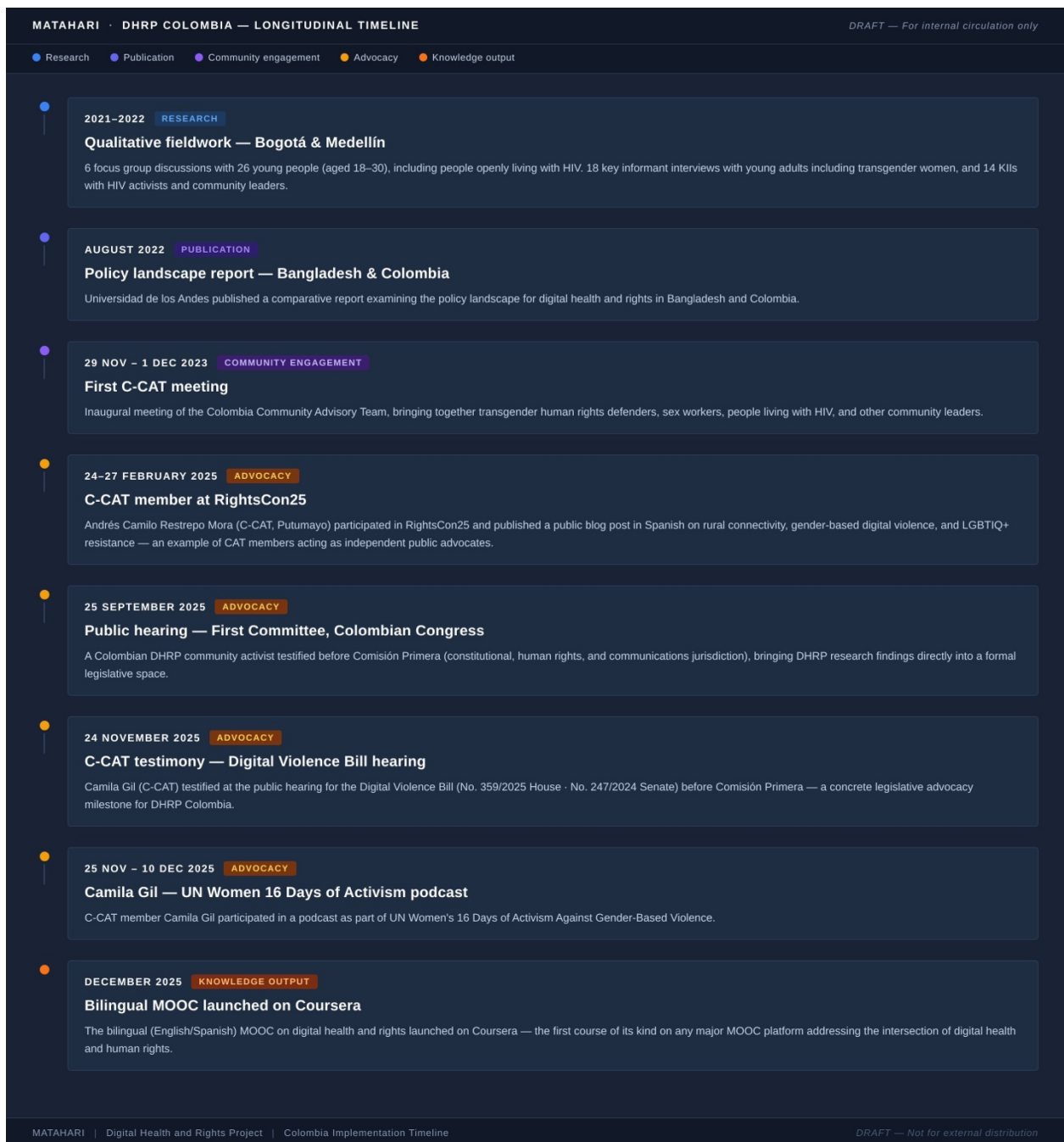


Figure 4: Longitudinal timeline of events - Colombia

## Ghana

### Key Publications

- Digitalisation, Health, and Participation: A Brief on Ghana (2024) [Link](#)
- Paying the Costs of Connection: Human rights of young adults in the digital age in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam (2025) [Link](#)
- Navigating Human Rights and Risks Online: Young Ghanaians and the Future of Digital Health (2026) [Link](#)
- Davis, Kpodo, Pham, et al., 2023, "Digital health and human rights of young adults in Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam: A qualitative participatory action research study." *BMJ Global Health* [Link](#)
- DHRP "National Policy Brief – Navigating Human Rights and Risks Online: Young Ghanaians and the Future of Digital Health" [Link](#)

### Introduction and Context

Ghana is a country of approximately 35 million people and is bordered by Côte d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, and Togo to the east. Data Reportal's 2023 report, cited in the University of Warwick 2024 Digitalisation, Health and Participation policy brief, placed Ghana's internet penetration at 68.3%.<sup>64</sup> Data Reportal's 2026 report on Ghana states that internet penetration has since increased, rising to 74.6% of the total population by October 2025.<sup>65</sup> The 2024 Digitalisation, Health and Participation report illustrates several digital divides, including based on literacy, gender, and urban-rural divide.<sup>66</sup>

The Ghana Health Service (GHS) has a Policy and Strategy on Digital Health (2023 - 2027) to improve health delivery in the country, with a vision therein that all communities in Ghana have access to timely, quality and comprehensive health through the use of Information Communication Technology.<sup>67</sup> The document contains activities such as conducting periodic needs assessment of ICT infrastructure and the development of a health information security policy for the GHS, but does not mention gender, disability, or vulnerable populations and the digital divides they face. This oversight is particularly salient given the revival of the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill (the so-called "Anti-LGBTQ Bill") on 17 February 2026, a bill that was first tabled in 2021, but which lapsed upon dissolving of the Parliament at the last elections.<sup>68</sup> The strong support for this Bill by Members of Parliament means that there continues to be a challenging environment for structurally excluded populations such as LGBTQ people.

In Ghana, the DHRP was initially carried out by a local network which served as subgrantee to GNP+ until late 2025, when the work was continued by a small team of consultants and the G-CATs.

### Programme and Evaluation Findings

According to Diana Wahab, a G-CAT member, research under this Botnar III grant involved interviews and FGDs with 302 individuals across Ghana, including in both rural and urban areas.<sup>69</sup> An internal document titled "Ghana\_FGD\_and\_IDI\_recs\_2025\_1\_14\_1913" summarised insights from 30 unique individuals from urban, periurban and rural Ghana, including female, male, trans, non-binary, bisexual and MSM individuals; individuals reported anxiety about personal information being accessible, shared or sold without consent, experiences of blackmail, non-

<sup>64</sup> Digital Health and Rights Project, Digitalisation, Health, and Participation: A Brief on Ghana (University of Warwick and NAP+ Ghana, 2024), [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/cim/research/digital-health-rights/publications/dhrp\\_-\\_ghana\\_final\\_version.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/cim/research/digital-health-rights/publications/dhrp_-_ghana_final_version.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> Simon Kemp, 'Digital 2026: Ghana', Data Reportal, 8 November 2025, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2026-ghana>.

<sup>66</sup> Digital Health and Rights Project, Digitalisation, Health, and Participation: A Brief on Ghana.

<sup>67</sup> Ghana Health Service, "Policy and Strategy on Digital Health 2023-2027" <[https://extranet.who.int/countryplanningcycles/sites/default/files/public\\_file\\_rep/GHA\\_Ghana\\_Policy-and-Strategy-on-Digital-Health\\_2023-2027.Pdf](https://extranet.who.int/countryplanningcycles/sites/default/files/public_file_rep/GHA_Ghana_Policy-and-Strategy-on-Digital-Health_2023-2027.Pdf)> accessed 19 April 2026

<sup>68</sup> Larissa Kojoué, 'Ghana's Parliament Revives Dangerous Anti-LGBT Bill', Human Rights Watch, 10 March 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/03/10/ghanas-parliament-revives-dangerous-anti-lgbt-bill>.

<sup>69</sup> Diana Wahab, quoted in an FGD conducted with the Ghana CAT, conducted 19 March 2026

consensual sharing of intimate images, catfishing and online harassment, trans and non-binary participants described being treated as outcasts in both daily life and online spaces, and being directed to unverified or harmful sources when searching for health information.<sup>70</sup> In the "Paying the Costs of Connection" report, a 30-year old man from Tamale, a rural desert region in northern Ghana, described how fundamental literacy skills was a barrier to digital inclusion and finding access to whatever one needs from social media or Internet.<sup>71</sup>

A major finding of our evaluation is how the G-CAT gained legitimacy as experts on digital health and rights domestically. According to Racheal Antwi, Vice Chair G-CAT:

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*"With the digital health and rights project and with the Ghana community advisory team leveraging their various platforms, we have become the go-to people. If people wanted to have conversations about digital health, they would reach out and say, is someone available to speak on this issue? At ICASA we moderated a session on technology-facilitated abuse – and we got feedback from people from different countries that we are doing an amazing job. That has shaped our knowledge and made us thought leaders."*

*(Racheal Antwi, Vice Chair G-CAT, interviewed 19 April 2026)*

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Legitimacy was further demonstrated through the invitation to speak to TV in February 2026 in a broadcast titled "Digital Consent and Privacy: Are Ghanaians Safe in the Online Space" on a programme called Prime Morning, and at time of writing the Ghana team continue to reach out to communities on their research findings and advocacy messages:

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*"We have done some media engagement on national television. Together with the young people on the project, we continue to amplify their voices through quotes and poster designs, and this has reached quite a number of people within our space."*

*(Richard Adozgo, Youth Coordinator, Ghana, FGD conducted 17 March 2026)*

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Interviews with the Ghana team also indicate strong endorsement of the T-PAR approach, especially considering the difficult domestic legal climate:

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*"I may not be in all the communities that we've worked with – female sex workers, people within the LGBTQI communities, persons living with HIV. Yet I get to work with them, where they tell me what their needs are, and then we roll it out in order to suit them. In this kind of situation, the participatory approach would be the best, given the legal climate."*

*(Alberta Nadutey, Researcher, Ghana, FGD conducted 17 March 2026)*

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<sup>70</sup> Ghana\_FGD\_and\_IDI\_recs\_2025\_1\_14\_1913 (Project internal document reviewed by the Matahari team).

<sup>71</sup> DHRP, Paying the Costs of Connection: Human rights of young adults in the digital age in Colombia, Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam (2025)

## Summary of Key Findings

- Strong results of the T-PAR approach include CATs gaining legitimacy as experts in digital health and rights in public spaces, including in the press; strong support of the research team for the T-PAR approach.
- Research findings include the following: individuals reported anxiety about personal information being accessible, shared or sold without consent, experiences of blackmail, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, catfishing and online harassment, trans and non-binary participants described being treated as outcasts in both daily life and online spaces, and being directed to unverified or harmful sources when searching for health information.

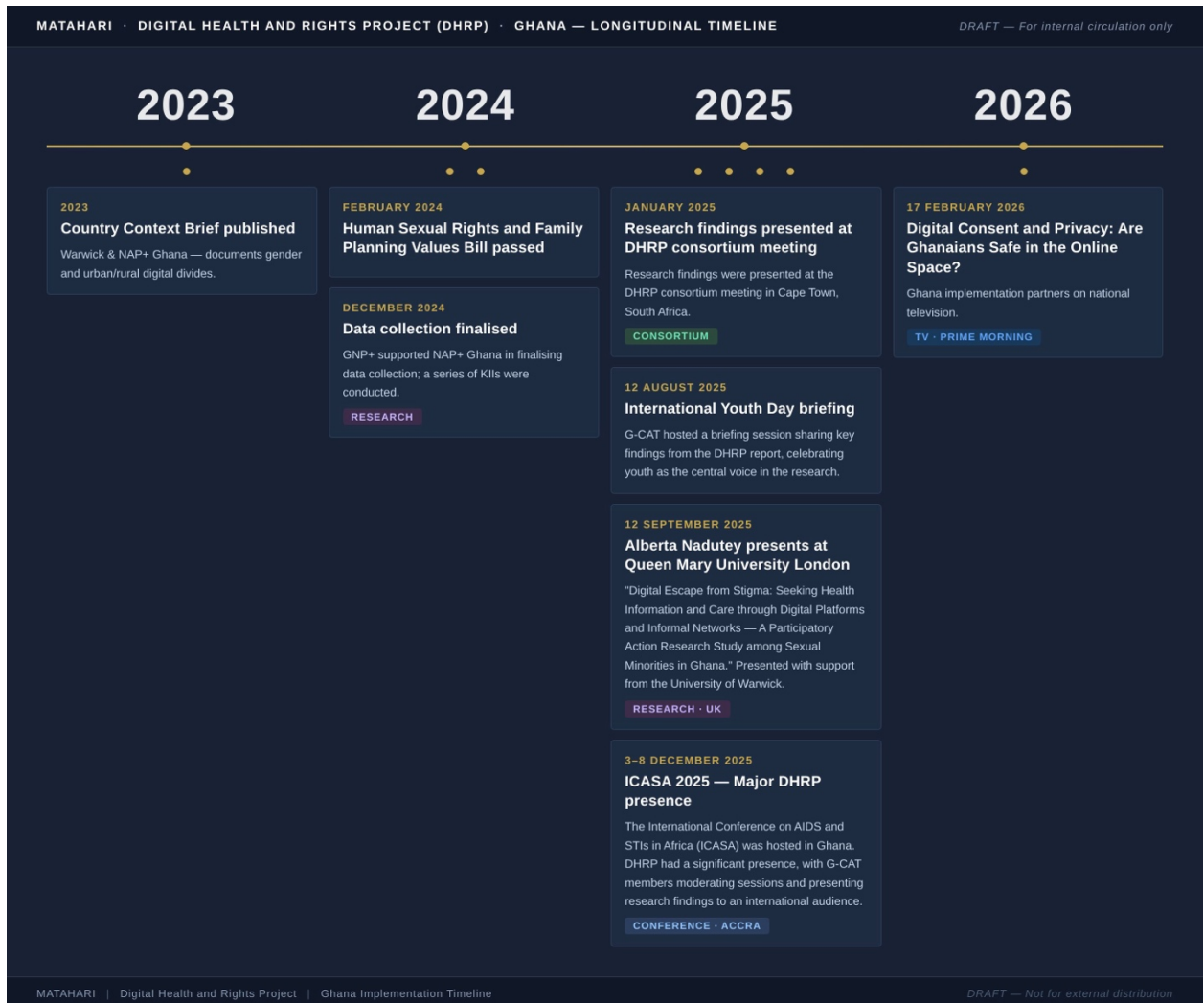


Figure 5: Longitudinal timeline of events - Ghana

## Kenya

### Key publications

- KELIN, K-CAT, DHRP (2026), The Future of Human Rights In The Digital Age: Youth Perspectives on digital Empowerment, Inclusion, and Governance in Kenya. [Link](#)
- Inganga, Winnie Gift (2025), A Call for Social Responsibility: Protecting Our Data and Each Other's Privacy. [Link](#)
- Davis, Koomson, Gonzalez-Urbe, Maleche (2025), Online Abuse Is Undermining the Right to Health. Global Health Now. [Link](#)
- K-CAT (2025), A Call to Action by Young People for Just Digital Future. [Link](#)
- KELIN (2025), The Digital Health and Rights Project urge the Kenyan government to accept the recommendations put forward in Kenya's recent Universal Period Review. [Link](#)
- DHRP, University of Warwick, KELIN (2024), Country Brief: Digitalisation, Health and Participation: A Brief on Kenya. [Link](#)

### Introduction and Context

Kenya has an estimated population of between 53.3 to 57.5 million<sup>72</sup> and borders Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the north, and Somalia and the Indian Ocean to the east. Per Statista reporting, internet penetration in Kenya ranked 26th in a comparison of countries in Africa,<sup>73</sup> with internet traffic mostly via mobile phones, which appears true for all countries across the continent, where early 2024 statistics report around 74% of internet traffic through mobile phones, which is over 10% higher than the global average.<sup>74</sup> For 2025, the Communications Authority of Kenya reported upgrades of mobile networks with 4g and 5g coverage as well as smartphone penetration of over 83% in mid-June of that year, illustrating “Kenya’s deepening reliance on mobile and internet services for economic and social activities”, which is happening alongside a significant increase in detected cybersecurity threats/<sup>75</sup>

Kenya has dedicated data protection laws, including the 2019 Data Protection Act, 2019 (DPA); the 2018 Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act; and the Kenya Information and Communications Act. All these laws precede the DHRP and each includes protection against cybercrimes. Research conducted during the DHRP, revealed that while the DPA is comprehensive and established a dedicated office (Office of the Data Protection Commissioner) to enforce the legal provisions, other laws lack “timely, survivor-centred remedies (takedowns, protective orders, psychosocial and medical support) for technology-facilitated abuses, especially health-related violations affecting women, LGBTQ+ people, sex workers and other marginalized groups.”<sup>76</sup>

KELIN, the consortium organisation implementing the DHRP in Kenya, has a long history of protecting the human rights of people living with HIV, including in the areas of e.g., discrimination, privacy, and health.<sup>77</sup> KELIN co-founded the DHRP in 2019. Kenya was the first among the four countries in the project under review to implement T-PAR and refined the research tools during fieldwork there. In 2023, KELIN established the Kenya Community Advisory Team (K-CAT) to implement the T-PAR in Kenya. A first research inception workshop was held in the country in early 2024.<sup>78</sup> Notably, KELIN has strong expertise in impact litigation and legal advocacy with national and sub-national government actors and the legal system.

### Programme and Evaluation Findings

Research for the DHRP in Kenya commenced in 2024, with 16 FGD (four each in Nairobi, Migori, Kitui, Mombasa). The Paying the Cost of Connection report details situations of rights abuses that young people face in digital spaces in Kenya.<sup>79</sup> Recommendations in the report include more affordable mobile connectivity options, sensitisation for the nature of technology-facilitated abuse, development of redress channels, and data protection, among others.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>72</sup> 2025 numbers from Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. <https://www.knbs.or.ke/>; and UNFP <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/KE>

<sup>73</sup> Statista. Internet usage in Kenya <https://www.statista.com/topics/11395/internet-usage-in-kenya/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1124283/internet-penetration-in-africa-by-country/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.ca.go.ke/mobile-internet-and-tech-services-surge-kenya-digital-shift-accelerates>

<sup>76</sup> Inganga, Winnie Gift (2025), A Call for Social Responsibility: Protecting Our Data and Each Other's Privacy. <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/news-and-blog/a-call-for-social-responsibility-protecting-our-data-and-each-others-privacy/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.kelinkenya.org/about-us/>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.kelinkenya.org/kelin-team-preps-for-research-work-under-the-digital-health-rights-project-dhrp/>

<sup>79</sup> <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025-DHRP-Paying-the-costs-report.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Annex-DHRP-Community-Recommendations.pdf>

### Engagement of young people

In Kenya, the applicability of the T-PAR for young people affected by HIV in the context of digital health and rights was apparent. Kenyan interviewees from consortium member KELIN as well as K-CAT members all agreed on the effectiveness of the DHRP on engagement of young people. Co-PI Allan Maleche described the depth of the involvement in his key informant interview. He stated:

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*“For me what really stands out is the fact that they were there. They were trained on how to do the research. They were trained on advocacy. They were involved in the collection of data, and that really opened up them to be able to be engaged. But it also, in a way, created some unity among them. You’d see them forming WhatsApp groups at a country level, engaging on even national things in the Kenyan context.”*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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The group of young people referenced by Maleche was the K-CAT, a group of twelve young people active on a variety of health issues. Their involvement in the DHRP extended from the conception of the research, the data collection and analysis, to report writing and co-authorship on a peer-reviewed journal article.<sup>81</sup> Winnie Gift Inganga, the K-CAT coordinator, called the K-CAT “an amazing pillar of research” that achieved the goal of youth engagement in the T-PAR throughout the full process. Inganga reflected that the goal of building the capacity of young people had also been achieved, in her opinion, because the CATs received dedicated training on digital health and human rights as well as research methods. During this evaluation, she shared her thoughts on the quality of the T-PAR as follows:

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*“Something else was how meaningful and how inclusive it was. It [the T-PAR] created an amazing environment to also just get the best possible findings that we could, because we had amazing participants who were just warm, comfortable. They enjoyed being part of the study. So it just made the research very easy. Nothing was generic. The conversations were just flowing so easy and so genuinely. I think that had a great impact on the findings that we were able to get. They were very authentic.”*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT Coordinator and Researcher, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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T-PAR is meant to benefit from the involvement of the communities that are subject of the research precisely for the positive impact that the infusion of their lived experience has on the research process, as Inganga described. At the same time, research participation is expected to influence the skillset of the participants. This mutuality carried through most of the data reviewed for this evaluation. In addition, K-CAT members reflected on the feeling of new community and joint responsibility that Maleche alluded to in his interview. The feeling of responsibility to not only documenting shortcomings in digital health and rights but to address them was evident in a written reflection from a K-CAT member, shared with the evaluation team per email, which read:

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*“In my point of view, the breakthrough change for young KPs in Kenya is a good chance to self-organize and protect one another against digital challenges, exemplified by the role of the K-CAT... During the incident in July 2024 where a... employee was suspected of transmitting HIV to many people, K-CAT members immediately contacted the authorities... to verify the truth and disseminate accurate information on social media, calling on everyone to stop sharing fake news... This change is extremely important because it builds the capacity for autonomy, proactivity, and readiness to face difficulties among community groups.”*

*(Written submission to CAT MSC meeting 17 March 2026)*

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<sup>81</sup> Timothy Wafula, key informant interview, 11 March 2026

This statement reflects how K-CAT members were able to apply their newly gained knowledge beyond research and to respond to the realities that their research has documented, in exactly the way that T-PAR intends to turn research into actionable information.

### Research Findings and Advocacy

The DHRP T-PAR in Kenya came at an opportune advocacy moment, with the country up for Universal Period Review (UPR)<sup>82</sup> before the United National Human Rights Council in 2025. KELIN and other consortium members submitted a parallel submission on the right to privacy and information technology to the UPR process.<sup>83</sup> In its section on the right to health and digitalisation (“use of new technologies”), concerns raised include the lack of regulatory protection for electronic health records, limited oversight and transparency of public-private health apps, and potential for harm when young people use social media to access health information or services, including cyberbullying. The parallel submission was referenced in the OHCHR Summary of Stakeholder Submissions.<sup>84</sup>

- Ensure that there is an effective legal and regulatory framework in place to guarantee a human rights-based approach in the design and deployment of digital health technologies by the government and non-state actors which provides for the meaningful participation of affected communities and protects people's right to health and privacy amongst other fundamental rights including non-discrimination and equality, by reinitiating a legislative process to enact a comprehensive digital health legislation that aligns with the Constitution.
- Take steps to ensure that the necessary protections are in place for all, but in particular women and girls, persons living with HIV, and young people, to access sexual and reproductive health information and services safely and securely, and adopt a strong regulatory framework to protect the confidentiality and privacy of their data and health status including through the effective implementation of the Data Protection Act, 2019

Figure 6: Selected Recommendations from Joint Submission to Kenya UPR Process

The UPR can be a relevant precursor to national government engagement, because, ideally, at the end of the process, the national government accepts the recommendations put before it by the UN member states, thus providing civil society with potential leverage to hold their government to account. Maleche pointed out that their advocacy further benefited from the Kenyan government's interest in digitalisation in the health space, which reflects on the relevance and timeliness of undertaking the DHRP in Kenya. He said:

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*“I think for us in Kenya at a national level, it worked out well, because our government has got a strong push on taking forward digital health and technology and use of AI in the health system. It provided a good atmosphere for us to be able to engage at the national level in terms of going forward. So that was a bit advantageous to us, because this was a topic of interest to the government, and some of our findings then proved to be relevant at that particular point of time.”*

*(Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN Kenya, interviewed 11 March 2026)*

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The research results referenced by Maleche were important not only because they related to government interests. They also described recurring human rights concerns that the legal framework in Kenya had aimed to address with the 2019 DPA. Timothy Wafula, programme manager for DHRP at KELIN, expressed surprise at the persistence of some of the issues that the research uncovered, like so:

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*“These are issues that have been documented before. It was quite surprising to see that we still have a re-emergence of similar concerns. Especially in Kenya, we do have a data protection law. So if we get findings around people feeling their data is not safe, they don't know redress mechanisms for when their data is violated, they have concerns around data protection - that was quite*

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<sup>82</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/upr-home>

<sup>83</sup> JS32, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ke-stakeholders-info-s49>

<sup>84</sup> <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/49/KEN/3>

*surprising. We did not expect that data protection will, for instance, be an issue of concern coming up, but it did come up again.”*

*(Timothy Wafula, Programme Manager, KELIN Kenya, 11 March 2026)*

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Wafula’s comment brings to the forefront the importance of advocacy for legislation and advocacy for implementation of legislation, both of which KELIN brought experience into the DHRP. Inganga of the K-CAT commented positively on their inclusion in national and international advocacy spaces, including an invitation from the Ministry of Health that the implementers in Kenya leveraged based on the T-PAR findings.

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*“We were invited by the Ministry of Health to assist them to develop the digital health strategy. We will also be invited to help them to help develop the AI strategy.”*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT coordinator, 3 March 2026)*

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Receiving an invitation to policy spaces on the national level was a considerable achievement of the DHRP in Kenya. However, Inganga reflected that an invitation is the first step, not the result. About the K-CAT experience, she shared in her interview the following observations:

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*“First of all, we were the only young people in that room and we were able to bring that up and highlight that [research results]. Something else that we realized was how we were just invited [to] their third and last meeting.”*

*(Winnie Gift Inganga, K-CAT coordinator, interviewed 3 March 2026.)*

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Despite the feeling of being sidelined in some government meetings, the K-CAT was able to bring their recommendations up in a national government forum and to respond with corrections to government assertions.<sup>85</sup> Additional outputs following the research included a November 2025 call to action by the K-CAT for Digital Health Week.<sup>86</sup>

Maleche concurred that the K-CAT and KELIN were able to engage several national institutions throughout the three year DHRP period, including the Gender Commission, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the Data Protection Office, the Ministry of Health, in constructive conversations based on DHRP research findings.<sup>87</sup> Advocacy work in Kenya remained ongoing at the writing of this report, including through KELIN’s role as national coordinator for the Transform Health Kenya Coalition, which focuses on inclusion of key and affected populations and achieving UHC through digital technology and data.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Winnie Gift Inganga, 3 March 2026

<sup>86</sup> Kenya Community Advisory Team (2025). A call to action by young people for a just digital future. <https://www.kelinkenya.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/A-Call-to-Action-by-Young-People-for-a-Just-Digital-Future.pdf>

<sup>87</sup> Allan Maleche, 11 March 2026

<sup>88</sup> Transform Health Kenya. <https://transformhealthcoalition.org/national-coalition/kenya/>



## Vietnam

### Key Publications

- Davis, Kpodo, Pham, et al., (2023). Digital health and human rights of young adults in Ghana, Kenya and Vietnam: A qualitative participatory action research study. *BMJ Global Health* [Link](#)
- Digital Health and Rights Project Consortium, Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+) (2024). Country Brief: Digitalisation, Health and Participation: A Brief on Vietnam. [Link](#)
- Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+) (2025). Paying the Costs of Connection: Vietnam Policy Brief. [Link](#)
- Sandset T, Pham T, Dong DD, Davis SLM (2025). Sexual and reproductive health and digital human rights: a study with people living with HIV and key populations in Vietnam. [Link](#)
- We Are Restless (2026) Nothing About Us Without Us: Sinh Pham on Inclusion, Advocacy and the Power of Preparation. [Link](#)

### Introduction and Context

With a population size of 101,600,000, Vietnam is the largest country in the DHRP consortium and borders China to the North, the South China Sea to the East, and Laos and Cambodia to the West. According to 2025 data, 68% of the population aged 15-64 years old, 23% between 0-14 years old, and 9% 65 years or older.<sup>89</sup> Based on 2024 data, 38.2% were living in urban areas, with that segment of the population increasing to 50% by 2045, leading the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam and United Nations Population Fund to recommend a focus on smart city models.<sup>90</sup> Vietnam has increasingly embraced digitalisation, which resulted in an above-average score vis-à-vis the global and Asia-Pacific averages in digital transformation, described as national digital policy, legal and governance frameworks.<sup>91</sup> Vietnam is one of only eight countries in a UNICEF study where internet use among youth has reached gender parity and one of only four with gender parity in digital skills.<sup>92</sup> The study did not include trans and nonbinary young people.

In terms of digital health and rights protections, Vietnam boasts several laws and policies, including, per DHRP research, laws on telecommunication, ICT, electronic transactions, and cybersecurity. Still, implementation of these laws has been uneven, and the legal landscape excludes health-related legislation. Youth participation in related policymaking has been limited.<sup>93</sup> Follow up research by the DHRP revealed how specific communities among young people are not adequately protected from harm in online settings.<sup>94</sup> Beginning in 2025, major political restructuring in Vietnam resulted in additional tightening of already limited civic space for community organisations, very few of which are advocating for digital rights.

The consortium partner in Vietnam was the Vietnamese Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+), a nationwide community-led organisation and partner to regional and global community networks. The Vietnam Community Advisory Team (V-CAT) included twelve members representing diverse communities of young people, two of whom were represented on the consortium's steering committee, one as standing member and one as alternate.<sup>95</sup>

### Programme and Evaluation Findings

<sup>89</sup> United Nations Population Fund. Viet Nam Population 2025. <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/VN>

<sup>90</sup> General Statistics Office of Viet Nam. Population Projections 2024-2074. [https://www.nso.gov.vn/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/ENG-pop\\_projection\\_fs\\_final.pdf](https://www.nso.gov.vn/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/ENG-pop_projection_fs_final.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (2023). Digital policy action areas for a connected ASEAN. <https://www.itu.int/hub/zh-hans/publication/d-pref-asean-01-2023/>, per Digital Health and Rights Project Consortium, Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+), 2024, Country Brief: Digitalisation, Health and Participation: A Brief on Vietnam. <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/resource-library/country-brief-digitalisation-health-and-participation-a-brief-on-vietnam/>

<sup>92</sup> UNICEF (2023). Bridging the digital divide: challenges and an urgent call for action for equitable digital skills development. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/ictgenderdivide>.

<sup>93</sup> per Digital Health and Rights Project Consortium, Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+), 2024, Country Brief: Digitalisation, Health and Participation: A Brief on Vietnam. <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/resource-library/country-brief-digitalisation-health-and-participation-a-brief-on-vietnam/>

<sup>94</sup> Davis, Koomson, Gonzalez-Uribe, Maleche (2025) "Online Abuse Is Undermining the Right to Health" *Global Health Now* (22 May 2025) <https://globalhealthnow.org/2025-05/online-abuse-undermining-right-health>

<sup>95</sup> For V-CAT steering committee reflections see e.g. We Are Restless (2026) Nothing About Us Without Us: Sinh Pham on Inclusion, Advocacy and the Power of Preparation. <https://wearerestless.org/2026/03/18/nothing-about-us-without-us-sinh-pham-on-inclusion-advocacy-and-the-power-of-preparation/>

According to evaluation findings, the project was highly relevant to the Vietnamese context: digital transformation has been accelerating while protection, literacy, and accountability mechanisms have not kept pace. Research findings revealed that digital platforms (i.e., Facebook, Zalo, Telegram) functioned as primary support infrastructures for sexual and reproductive health and HIV, especially during COVID-19, e.g., through enabling peer support, access to antiretroviral medicine, and psychosocial care; while at the same time furthering serious and concrete digital harms, i.e., privacy breaches, blackmail, online harassment, misinformation, and emotional distress. DHRP research documented data protection and misinformation as major entry points for harm. In this context, supported by the external evaluation, digital literacy emerged as a structural gap in Vietnam, not an individual deficit, especially for young and marginalised users who increasingly depended on digital spaces without having adequate knowledge of their rights or access to trustworthy support.<sup>96</sup> Vietnam's Programme for Medical Digitalization until 2025 and Orientation to 2030, reviewed as part of DHRP research, does not include a strategy on how to address the gaps it identifies with regard to the country's digital health strategy.<sup>97</sup> The project was timely not only because digital transformation has been advancing rapidly, but also because online harms were similarly escalating while community protection and support pathways lagged behind.

In an interview, one V-CAT member illustrated how this lack of knowledge presented at the beginning of the DHRP:

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*"At the start of the project, the biggest gap was that many community members did not recognize they had rights to privacy and protection in health and administrative settings and did not know where to seek trustworthy support."*

*(V-CAT member, interviewed 2 March 2026)*

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Over the course of the three years, the V-CAT-maintained fan page transformed from a very small circle into an interactive platform where community members asked questions, received referrals, and hotline functions became visible sources of digital health information and support, illustrating how young people increasingly recognized the V-CAT as an organized support group that translated technical concepts into community-friendly guidance and provided community members clearer pathways for advice, peer support, and response when facing scams, privacy risks, or technology-facilitated abuse.<sup>98</sup> Participants in the evaluation focus group discussion explained that the fan page helped translate technical digital health and rights concepts into community-friendly guidance on online harassment, misinformation, privacy protection, and safer use of digital platforms. Interventions included non-virtual settings such as a school-based activity and a digital health component integrated into a community run.

The strengthening of practical digital safety and response capacity among participants in Vietnam was significant, not only in terms of better understanding of concepts such as privacy, cyberviolence, and digital rights, but also with regards to concrete changes in behaviour: verifying information more carefully, using stronger privacy protections, saving evidence when personal data were misused, and reaching out to trusted support networks rather than remaining silent when facing online abuse themselves or witnessing abuse of others. In a July 2024 example, the V-CAT addressed community harm by responding proactively and strategically to a misinformation incident in Thai Nguyen concerning the HIV status of a female Samsung factory worker. V-CAT members verified facts with the local Centre for Disease Control and Samsung factory leadership, then employed social media to circulate accurate information and discourage the spread of fake news.

V-CAT member Minh Anh's reflection captures this shift clearly, describing a movement from fear of exposure and online scams to proactive control over digital safety, including more cautious sharing of health-related information and greater confidence in seeking support when facing technology-facilitated abuse.

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*"I have completely changed how I use the internet. I know how to set up stricter data privacy protections (enabling two-factor authentication; saving evidence when my personal information is stolen online; not blaming myself, etc.), being cautious when sharing sensitive information on health care applications and knowing how to verify health information to avoid misleading or confusing sources. ... This change helps me feel more confident when integrating into the society's digital*

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<sup>96</sup> Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+) (202, Paying the Costs of Connection: Vietnam Policy Brief. <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/resource-library/paying-the-cost-of-connection-vietnam-policy-brief/>

<sup>97</sup> Serra, Franco et al (2024) Research Report: Towards People-Centered Digital Health Strategies: Gender, Equity, Rights and Inclusion. [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/cim/research/digital-health-rights/publications/dhrp\\_2024\\_-\\_gender\\_equity\\_rights\\_and\\_inclusion\\_in\\_digital\\_health\\_strategies.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/cim/research/digital-health-rights/publications/dhrp_2024_-_gender_equity_rights_and_inclusion_in_digital_health_strategies.pdf)

<sup>98</sup> V-CAT Focus Group Discussion, 3 March 2026.

*transformation. It is not just technical knowledge, but a belief that helps me remove the barriers of fear to access online services for consultation and health care without worrying about privacy violations.”*

*(Minh Anh, V-CAT member, in a pre-focus group written submission dated 15 March 2026)*

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Digital Empowerment training e.g., the 24-28 April 2025 training for ten V-CAT members in Hanoi was an essential part of filling the identified technical needs through targeted skills building.<sup>99</sup> Targeted training was one mechanism through which participants built practical confidence, digital safety skills, and leadership readiness.

Similar to other countries in the DHRP, VNP+ and V-CAT members were essential for the community-led participatory action research: they influenced agenda-setting and interpretation of research data; development of advocacy strategy and active policy engagement. V-CAT input adopted into the DHRP governance structure included an alternate Steering Committee representative, and pre- and post-meetings to enable V-CAT members to better understand technically complex discussions to allow for more effective participation.<sup>100</sup> In turn, young V-CAT members brought distinctive leadership to outreach communication applying their strong understanding of how younger audiences engage online, resulting in trend-sensitive messaging and digital storytelling ideas. One interviewee noted that young members did not simply follow traditional advocacy formats but proposed more direct and digitally native approaches. Another reflected that young people understood the language and perspective of their generation and were highly capable of using AI and digital tools, although they still needed ethical and strategic guidance to ensure professionalism and policy relevance.<sup>101</sup>

Although the advocacy has not yet produced the type of concrete policy traction that participants had hoped for, a V-CAT member shared that they had gained access to important national spaces where young people could raise community concerns and speak as both community representatives and project members. The project also strengthened the foundations for advocacy. Participants in Vietnam valued the participant action research for identifying key issues and gaps affecting the community and serving as a unique and important tool for policy advocacy. Small-grant workshops and the resulting campaigns are evidence that members had gained practical digital rights and safety skills and could use locally generated data in policy dialogue with health departments, hospitals, and universities. Among the 2025 small project grants allocated through DHRP, one activity in Hung Yen gained strong support from the provincial Department of Health and evolved into a plan for recurring school-based outreach. The small grant in Binh Duong exposed over 1,000 people including government actors to the concept of digital health rights, resulting in substantial expressed demand for further learning on stigma, discrimination, and negative experiences in digital environments.

VNP+ programme manager Trang Pham reflected that institutional uptake was shaped by external administrative restructuring and staff turnover in public institutions, as well as competing system priorities that limited policy engagement opportunities, e.g., with CDCs and other health actors. Trang Pham reflected that digital health was often not treated as a current priority while systems were still stabilizing, leading her to suggest the following:

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*“Meaningful policy change will require more time, a longer funding cycle, and sufficient budget, because institutional uptake depends on many external factors beyond the project’s control.”*

*(Trang Pham, VNP+ programme manager, interviewed 3 March 2026)*

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Considering how civil society space for advocacy and political engagement on human rights in Vietnam can be challenging and time for advocacy activities during the project was limited, the project strategy in Vietnam has produced important progress. A 2025 DHRP journal publication stated that participation in research translated into advocacy outputs, including presentations to the Vietnamese Ministry of Health, PEPFAR in Vietnam, the Global Fund, among others; approval of follow-on funding for digital literacy training, and integration of digital rights into the global strategy of the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), further point to internal coherence and

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<sup>99</sup> Botnar III MEL reporting GNP+ May 2025.

<sup>100</sup> V-CAT focus group discussion 3 March 2026.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

effectiveness of the approach that DHRP employed.<sup>102[1]</sup> This demonstrates meaningful groundwork and some degree of visibility, which if continued may lead to structural uptake.

In 2024, a V-CAT member participated in a workshop on the Global Initiative for Digital Health in Geneva, upon invitation by the WHO Digital Health Department in Geneva, with focus on applying human rights, gender, and equity to identify mechanisms for personal protection from “data breaches, online harm and the spread of misinformation especially among young people in rural areas.”<sup>103</sup> Vietnamese young people attended the International AIDS Conference and participated in an international panel on digital health and rights; and a high-level event with representatives from PEPFAR, Global Fund, and the government of Argentina.<sup>104</sup> These opportunities signify growing recognition, exposure, and confidence among V-CAT members, enhancing the voices of the community on digital health and rights topics.

According to the evaluation data, which was collected prior to the conclusion of the DHRP, the most durable elements in Vietnam appeared to be the skills, confidence, and networked capacities built among participants, while the prospects for longer-term institutionalization or structural continuation appear more uncertain, especially in the context of shrinking HIV-related funding and more fragmented community organizing. Minh Anh of the V-CAT shared:

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*“In the context of shrinking international aid, the ability of community groups to stand on their own, knowing how to cooperate with the government and private agencies to protect digital rights, is the key to ensuring sustainability and equity in the future of digital health in Vietnam.”*

*(Minh Anh, V-CAT member, written submission to MSC meeting, 19 March 2026)*

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The Vietnam case highlights DHRP’s clear added value in strengthening community leadership, practical digital protection, and meaningful participation in digital health and rights work. Although larger structural change will require more time and stronger institutional pathways, the project has created a strong foundation on which future advocacy and community action can build.

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*“For me, one very significant lesson is that I’ve gradually shifted from the role of a “beneficiary” to the role of someone who can lead and create initiatives for my own community. Previously I always thought of myself as a marginalised group that needed support, but now I see that I too can be someone who creates support for others.”*

*(V-CAT member, FGD conducted 9 March 2026)*

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A truncated longitudinal timeline of events is presented in the figure below.

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<sup>102</sup> Sandset T, Pham T, Dong DD, Davis SLM (2024). Sexual and reproductive health and digital human rights: a study with people living with HIV and key populations in Vietnam. *Cult Health Sex.* 2025 Nov;27(11):1377-1392. doi: 10.1080/13691058.2024.2411406. Epub 2024 Oct 14. PMID: 39402802.

<sup>103</sup> Botnar 3 MEL Reporting GNP+, May 2025. On file with authors.

<sup>104</sup> Botnar 3 MEL Reporting Template May 2025 – STOPAIDS, 2025. On file with authors.

### Summary of Key Findings

- VNP+ and V-CAT members were central actors in the community-led participatory action research. They influenced agenda-setting, interpretation of research data.
- V-CAT members and VNP+ co-developed and led policy engagement in Vietnam, showcasing the potential for effectiveness and relevance of a more deeply embedded participation via the DHRP governance structure.
- Interviews with V-CAT members described genuine community participation and co-design in research, advocacy, and knowledge outputs.
- Multiple V-CAT members were represented at national and international events, showing meaningful distribution of expertise and selection with some recognition by local institutions.
- Knowledge gained in the DHRP benefited V-CAT members in other spaces, and resulted in a robust, meaningful and mutual relationship with academic partners.

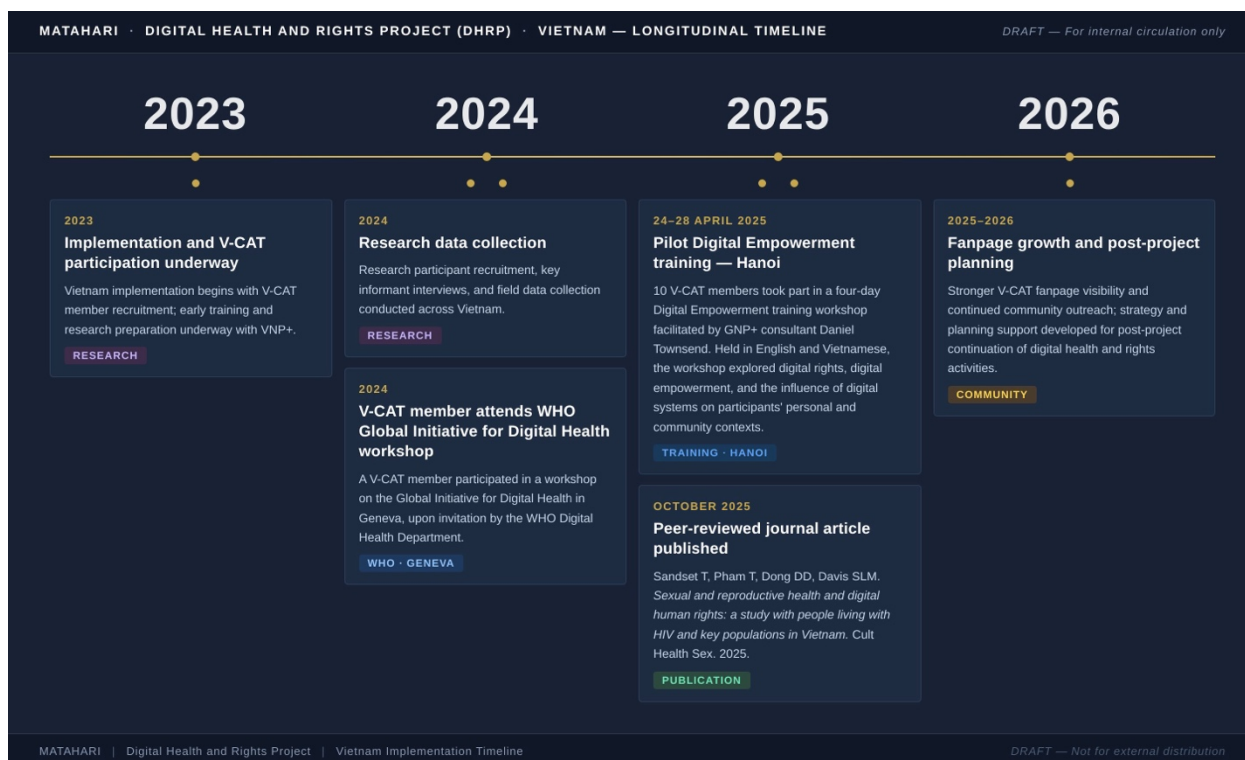


Figure 8: Longitudinal timeline of events - Vietnam

### B: Documents Reviewed for this Report

1. Botnar 3 Reporting Template, UniAndes, Reporting Period: June 2024 – May 2025
2. Botnar 3 Reporting Template, UniAndes, Reporting Period: Quarter 3 (June-Sept 23), Quarter 4 (Oct-Dec 23)
3. Andrés Camilo Restrepo Mora, “Viaje a RightsCon2025” Blog, Restless Development (10 April 2025) [Link](#)
4. Universidad de los Andes and COLEV, “Digital Health and Rights in Bangladesh and Colombia” (August 2022) <<https://colev.uniandes.edu.co/images/documentos/IP-DRAG-Bangladesh-Colombia-FINAL.pdf>> accessed 31 March 2026
5. Demographic Data and Graphs, internal document, Botnar III
6. Digital Health & Rights Project submission to the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls: 2026 Thematic Report on Gender Equality, the Digital Space and the Age of Artificial Intelligence (2025) <https://digitalhealthandrights.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/DHRP-Submission-to-the-UN-Working-Group-on-discrimination-against-women-and-girls-31-Oct-2025.pdf>
7. Serra, Franco et al (2024) Research Report: Towards People-Centered Digital Health Strategies: Gender, Equity, Rights and Inclusion. [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/cim/research/digital-health-rights/publications/dhrp\\_2024\\_-\\_gender\\_equity\\_rights\\_and\\_inclusion\\_in\\_digital\\_health\\_strategies.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/cim/research/digital-health-rights/publications/dhrp_2024_-_gender_equity_rights_and_inclusion_in_digital_health_strategies.pdf)
8. Botnar 3 MEL Reporting GNP+, May 2025
9. Botnar 3 MEL Reporting Template May 2025 - STOPAIDS

10. ANTI-OPPRESSION FRAMEWORK STRATEGY STOPAIDS 2021
11. Ghana\_FGD\_and\_IDI\_recs\_2025\_1\_14\_1913 in O1 Botnar 3 Research folder (internal document)

## **C: Written Submissions to the Most Significant Change Exercise**

### MSC Response from G-CAT Member 1

#### **1. During your participation in the DHRP, what was the most significant change that you experienced personally?**

The most significant change that I experienced through my participation in the Digital Health and Rights Project (DHRP) is the development of strong self-confidence and the ability to speak publicly about issues affecting young people in digital spaces. Before joining the project, I often felt hesitant when speaking in public forums or engaging in discussions about digital rights and health issues. However, through the trainings, discussions, and collaborative work with the Community Advisory Team and researchers, I gradually became more comfortable sharing my views and experiences. Today, I can confidently speak in meetings, community engagements, and advocacy discussions about the challenges young people face online and how these issues affect their health and well-being.

Another significant improvement has been in my research and community engagement skills. Being part of DHRP allowed me to participate in research activities that involved engaging with different groups in the community, listening to their experiences, and understanding how digital technologies shape their lives. This experience helped me appreciate the importance of community-led research and participatory approaches. I learned how to interact respectfully with participants, how to listen carefully to their stories, and how to reflect their voices in discussions about policy and advocacy.

My involvement in the project also deepened my understanding of the socio-cultural narratives and social norms that shape young people's experiences in digital spaces. Through the discussions and research activities, I became more aware of how stigma, discrimination, gender norms, and misinformation can influence how young people access digital health information and how they experience harm online. For example, issues such as online harassment, cyberbullying, and other forms of technology-facilitated abuse are often connected to broader social attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and health. Understanding these dynamics has helped me see the digital world not just as a technological space, but also as a social environment where existing inequalities can be reproduced or challenged.

Because of these experiences, my thinking and beliefs have also evolved. I now strongly believe that young people and community members must play an active role in shaping digital governance and policies that affect their lives. The project has shown me that when communities are involved in research and advocacy, they can contribute valuable knowledge and insights that policymakers and institutions might otherwise overlook.

This change is significant to me because it has strengthened my ability to contribute meaningfully to my community and to advocate for safer and more inclusive digital environments. I now feel empowered to speak up about digital rights issues, support community awareness activities, and engage with others to promote responsible and safe use of digital technologies. The confidence and knowledge I have gained through the DHRP will continue to influence my work and engagement with community issues beyond the duration of the project.

#### **2. In your view, what has been the most significant change for your community as a result of the DHRP?**

From my perspective, the most significant change that has occurred in my community as a result of the Digital Health and Rights Project is the increased awareness of technology-facilitated abuse and other digital rights issues. Before the project began its advocacy and community engagement activities, many people in the community were not familiar with the concept of technology-facilitated abuse or the different ways in which digital platforms can be used to harm others. Many young people experienced online harassment, cyberbullying, or privacy violations without fully understanding that these behaviours constitute abuse or that they have rights and options for responding to such situations.

Through the awareness activities and discussions facilitated by the project and the Community Advisory Team, more people in the community have begun to understand these issues. Community members are now more able to identify harmful online behaviours such as cyberbullying, non-consensual sharing of images, online harassment, and other forms of digital abuse. The conversations initiated through DHRP activities have helped people realise that these problems are real and that they affect many young people.

One example of this change is that young people in the community are now more open to discussing their experiences in digital spaces. Some participants who previously felt isolated in their experiences now recognise that others are facing similar challenges. This has encouraged more open dialogue about online safety, digital privacy, and responsible

use of social media. In some cases, young people have begun to seek advice or support when they encounter harmful situations online, rather than remaining silent.

I believe the DHRP is responsible for this change because the project created spaces for discussion, education, and community engagement around digital rights issues that were previously not widely discussed. The training sessions, community conversations, and research activities helped bring these topics to the attention of community members and encouraged people to reflect on their own experiences in digital spaces.

Thai change is significant because awareness is the first step towards addressing the challenges associated with digital technologies. When people understand the risks and their rights they are better equipped to protect themselves and support others who may experience harm online. Increased awareness also creates opportunities for communities to advocate for better protections, stronger policies, and safer digital environments for young people. In the long term, this growing awareness can contribute to building a more informed and resilient community that is able to navigate the digital world more safely and confidently.

### MSC Response from G-CAT Member 2

#### **1. During your participation in the DHRP, what was the most significant change that you experienced personally?**

The most significant change I experienced was a shift from simply sharing information to intentionally advocating for safe, rights-based digital health spaces for young people, especially YPLHIV. I became more aware of how misinformation, privacy risks, and stigma affect access to health information online. This changed how I design and deliver my work, making it more inclusive, evidence-based, and focused on digital safety and rights. It also strengthened my belief that access to accurate information is a form of power, and that young people must be supported not just to receive information, but to question, verify, and use it confidently. This change is important to me because it has made me more aware of what I consume and how I share it with the world around me.

#### **2. In your view, what has been the most significant change for your community as a result of the DHRP?**

In my view, the most significant change in my community resulting from the DHRP is improved access to reliable digital health information and increased awareness of digital rights among young people, especially YPLHIV. More young people are now able to identify misinformation, protect their privacy online, and confidently seek accurate SRHR information through trusted platforms. This change was evident in how participants engaged during the Thomson Reuters Foundation and Global Fund Breaking Barriers in West Africa dissemination sessions, asked informed questions, and shared verified information within their networks. The DHRP played a key role in providing me with the knowledge and necessary tools to facilitate digital literacy and create safe spaces for learning and discussion. This is significant because it reduces harm caused by misinformation and empowers young people to make informed decisions about their health and rights.

### MSC Response from V-CAT Member

#### **1. During your participation in the DHRP, what was the most significant change that you experienced personally?**

The biggest change for me: From a fear of personal data exposure and online scams to confidently taking control of myself in the digital space.

The most important change I experienced is the shift from an anxious, passive mindset to a proactive one, knowing how to control myself in the digital space. (knowing what to share, how to express opinions to avoid exposing my personal information).

Description of the change: Before participating in the project, I always lived in fear of identity theft, data leakage, or being online blackmailed because I had previously had my Facebook account hacked and my citizen identification information exposed. I used to view the internet as a place full of risks of surveillance from both private companies and social prejudices. Through meaningful participation in the project as a young person, I have understood that I have rights regarding my digital health and have started to learn how to protect myself.

Change in practice: I have completely changed how I use the internet. I know how to set up stricter data privacy protections (enabling two-factor authentication; saving evidence when my personal information is stolen online; not blaming myself, etc.), being cautious when sharing sensitive information on health care applications and knowing how to verify health information to avoid misleading or confusing sources. Instead of staying silent when bullied, I know how to reach out to community group leaders and support channels to address technology-facilitated abuse (TFA).

Change in belief: I no longer believe that the internet is just a surveillance tool or a place full of stigma and discrimination. I believe in the vision of a more "civilized, polite" and equitable digital space, where AI and digital health technology can truly improve lives if managed based on human rights.

→ This change helps me feel more confident when integrating into the society's digital transformation. It is not just technical knowledge, but a belief that helps me remove the barriers of fear to access online services for consultation and health care without worrying about privacy violations.

## **2. In your view, what has been the most significant change for your community as a result of the DHRP?**

The formation of an advocacy network led by community leaders.

In my point of view, the breakthrough change for young KPs in Vietnam is a good chance to self-organize and protect one another against digital challenges, exemplified by the role of the Vietnam Community Advisory Team (V-CAT).

Description of the change and example: Community groups have shifted from operating individually and independently to becoming a network capable of responding quickly to misinformation and cyberbullying that spread at breakneck speed. One specific example in Vietnam: During the incident in July 2024 where a Samsung employee was suspected of transmitting HIV to many people, V-CAT members immediately contacted the authorities (Samsung, CDC Thai Nguyen) to verify the truth and disseminate accurate information on social media, calling on everyone to stop sharing fake news.

→ This action directly reduced the panic and stigma targeted at people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV).

The role of DHRP in this change: DHRP acted as the "expert," "advisor," and "pioneer" for this change through participatory action research methods. Instead of just being "research subjects," we were empowered by the project to directly contribute to and build questionnaires, collect data, and verify findings. DHRP trained, coached, and supported the connection of community group leaders (4 CAT teams: Kenya, Ghana, Colombia, Vietnam), turning them into pioneers leading advocacy and communication activities based on real-world contexts.

→ This change is extremely important because it builds the capacity for autonomy, proactivity, and readiness to face difficulties among community groups.

In the context of shrinking international aid, the ability of community groups to stand on their own, knowing how to cooperate with the government and private agencies to protect digital rights, is the key to ensuring sustainability and equity in the future of digital health in Vietnam.

## **MSC Response from DHRP Implementer**

### **1. During your participation in the DHRP, what was the most significant change that you experienced personally?**

During my participation in the Digital Health and Rights Project, the most significant change I experienced personally was shifting from being a passive user of digital tools to becoming an active advocate for digital health transformation grounded in human rights. This was the first project I managed that explicitly focused on digital transformation in health, particularly around young people's experiences accessing information online, and it sparked a deep curiosity in me to learn more, engage in stakeholder discussions, and participate in webinars and trainings so I could confidently contribute my own insights alongside those of other young people. It has changed my practice by making me more intentional and critical in how I engage with digital health tools, always considering data safety, accessibility for marginalised communities, and the broader human rights implications, including how context, language, and culture shape these tools. It has also shifted my beliefs, as I now view digital health innovations through a human rights lens and feel a strong responsibility to advocate for safe, inclusive platforms where communities can voice their needs and concerns. This change is significant to me because it has positively transformed my attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, deepened my passion for digital innovation in health, and strengthened my commitment to championing digital health transformation in Africa by Africans - here are my reflections following my participation at the Africa AI in health conference.

### **2. In your view, what was the most significant change that Restless Development experienced on an organizational level due to participation in DHRP?**

At an organisational level, this programme grounded our programming in digital transformation beyond the use of digital tools in our work, pushing us to look more intentionally at the experiences of young people in digital transformation. We now know that we can leverage our experiences from the DHRP programme, especially the training resources we have developed, to scale up our work on digital transformations and the use of AI. We have just rolled out research on Artificial Intelligence in collaboration with the University of Cambridge and Makerere

University, which aims to understand how young people aged 18–35 use AI, with findings that will be used to advance research, improve programmes, and inform policymakers about what young people want and need from AI. We are also exploring partnership with CIPESA as the lead convenor for the Forum for Internet Freedom in Africa (FIFA) to collaborate on strengthening the meaningful participation of young people in digital governance spaces like FIFA. Overall, this programme has grounded our expertise in digital health and rights and we are keen and already taking action and exploring partnership to further our ambitions in this area.

**3. In your view, what has been the most significant change for your community/the community you serve, as a result from the DHRP?**

Our work through the DHRP programme has significantly impacted the leadership journeys of the community advisory teams (CATs) we directly support, enabling them to meaningfully participate in programme governance, enhance their leadership skills, and engage in regional and global advocacy spaces. Through our direct support, CAT members have gained confidence to actively contribute in governance meetings such as SteerCo, and many have applied these skills to influence how youth can meaningfully participate in other governance spaces. For example, a CAT member from Vietnam reflected on the power of preparation and how it shaped their participation in SteerCo. This increased youth participation has created opportunities for learning, exposure, and policy influence, allowing community advisory team members to contribute directly to shaping what youth engagement in digital governance spaces could look like. The DHRP programme is clearly responsible for this change because of the programme youth structures across the 4 countries, training, opportunities and support provided directly enabled these outcomes. This change is significant because it strengthens youth leadership, amplifies their voices in decision-making, and ensures that young people have a meaningful role in shaping digital governance.