

## The Right to Information and Angolan Youth: State of Legislation, Digital Barriers and Perspectives for 2050

**O Direito à Informação e a Juventude Angolana: Estado da Legislação, Barreiras Digitais e Perspetivas para 2050**

**El derecho a la información y la juventud angolana: Estado de la legislación, barreras digitales y perspectivas para 2050**

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyses the right to information as a fundamental element for the consolidation of democracy and the strengthening of citizenship among Angolan youth, in light of high-impact literature on access to information and digital exclusion in Africa. The objective is to critically examine the current legislative framework, identify the main digital barriers limiting the exercise of this right, and outline strategic perspectives for the 2050 horizon. The research adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, grounded in a systematic literature review and documentary analysis of legal frameworks, including the Constitution of Angola (2010), the Press Law, and comparative legislation from South Africa, Nigeria, and Mozambique. The results demonstrate a significant discrepancy between the normative framework and practical reality, marked by three converging barriers: prohibitive connectivity costs (which may consume more than 22% of a worker's monthly income), infrastructural inequalities (degradation of public libraries and fragmented internet coverage), and an information literacy deficit. The absence of a General Law on Access to Information is also highlighted, which weakens institutional transparency. Comparative analysis reveals that the adoption of a law, although necessary, is not sufficient; independent oversight commissions and a change in administrative culture are also indispensable. It is concluded that overcoming these barriers requires urgent normative reforms, equitable digital inclusion public policies (including social data tariffs), and the strengthening of information literacy.

**Keywords:** Angolan Youth; Right to Information; Digital Inclusion; Citizenship; Angola 2050.

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O presente estudo analisa o direito à informação como elemento fundamental para a consolidação da democracia e o fortalecimento da cidadania da juventude angolana, à luz da literatura de alto impacto sobre acesso à informação e exclusão digital em África. O objectivo é examinar criticamente o estado da legislação vigente, identificar as principais barreiras digitais que limitam o exercício desse direito e delinear perspectivas estratégicas para o horizonte de 2050. A pesquisa adopta uma abordagem qualitativa, de carácter exploratório e descritivo, fundamentada em revisão sistemática da literatura e análise documental de marcos legais, incluindo a Constituição de Angola (2010), a Lei de Imprensa e legislação comparada de África do Sul, Nigéria e Moçambique. Os resultados demonstram uma significativa discrepância entre o quadro normativo e a realidade prática, marcada por três barreiras convergentes: custos proibitivos de conectividade (que podem consumir mais de 22% do rendimento mensal de um trabalhador), desigualdades infraestruturais (degradação de bibliotecas públicas e fragmentação da cobertura de internet) e défice de literacia informacional. Destaca-se, ainda, a ausência de uma Lei Geral de Acesso à Informação, que fragiliza a transparência institucional. A análise comparativa revela que a aprovação de uma lei, embora necessária, não é suficiente sendo indispensáveis comissões independentes e mudança na cultura administrativa. Conclui-se que a superação dessas barreiras exige reformas normativas urgentes, políticas públicas de inclusão digital equitativa (incluindo tarifas sociais de dados) e o fortalecimento da literacia informacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Juventude Angolana; Direito à Informação; Inclusão Digital; Cidadania; Angola 2050.

## Resumen

El presente estudio analiza el derecho a la información como un elemento fundamental para la consolidación de la democracia y el fortalecimiento de la ciudadanía de la juventud angoleña, a la luz de la literatura de alto impacto sobre acceso a la información y exclusión digital en África. El objetivo es examinar críticamente la legislación vigente, identificar las principales barreras digitales y delinear perspectivas estratégicas para el horizonte de 2050. La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo, exploratorio y descriptivo, basado en una revisión sistemática de la literatura y análisis documental de marcos legales como la Constitución de Angola (2010), la Ley de Prensa y la legislación comparada de Sudáfrica, Nigeria y Mozambique. Los resultados evidencian una discrepancia significativa entre el marco normativo y la realidad práctica, marcada por tres barreras convergentes: costos prohibitivos de conectividad (más del 22% del ingreso mensual de un trabajador), desigualdades infraestructurales (degradación de bibliotecas públicas y fragmentación de la cobertura de internet) y déficit de alfabetización informacional. Se destaca la ausencia de una Ley General de Acceso a la Información, que debilita la transparencia institucional. El análisis comparativo revela que aprobar una ley, aunque necesario, es insuficiente si se requieren comisiones independientes y cambio en la cultura administrativa. Se concluye que superar estas barreras exige reformas normativas urgentes, políticas de inclusión digital equitativa (tarifas sociales de datos) y el fortalecimiento de la alfabetización informacional.

**Palabras clave:** Juventud angoleña; Derecho a la información; Inclusión digital; Ciudadanía; Angola 2050.

## Introduction

The right to information has been widely recognised in specialist literature as one of the fundamental pillars for the consolidation of democracy and for the full exercise of citizenship in contemporary societies (Stiglitz, 2002; Mendel, 2003). In contexts of democratic transition, such as the case of Angola, the guarantee of this right is not limited to the formal-legal dimension but extends to the effective capacity of citizens, particularly young people, to access, understand, and utilise public information in order to participate in democratic debate (Norris, 2001; Castells, 2009).

Recent studies on governance and access to information on the African continent demonstrate that the existence of progressive legal frameworks does not automatically translate into inclusive transparency practices (Calland and Tilley, 2002; Ejitagh, 2019). On the contrary, the effectiveness of the right to information depends on a complex ecosystem that articulates normative provisions, technological infrastructures, levels of information literacy, and political will (Darch and Underwood, 2010; Paradigm Initiative, 2024). The importance of this problem is particularly acute for African youth, who represent the demographic majority of the continent but remain systematically underrepresented in information and power flows (Resnick and Thurlow, 2015; UNDP, 2022).

Angola fits into this framework with specific characteristics. The Constitution of the Republic of Angola of 2010 enshrines, in its Articles 40 and 52, the freedom to inform and to be informed, as well as the right of citizens to participate in political life through access to State acts (Republic of Angola, 2010). However, empirical studies and reports from civil society organisations have documented a profound gap between the legal norm and practical reality (Pamba, 2024; Freedom House, 2025). This gap manifests itself most acutely among Angolan youth – who represent more than 60% of the national population (INE, 2022) – due to the convergence of economic, infrastructural, and cognitive barriers that limit their effective exercise of the right to information.

Thus, this study proposes to:

- (i) critically analyse the legislative framework in force in Angola, identifying its gaps in light of comparative law;
- (ii) examine the digital barriers that limit youth access to information; and
- (iii) outline a strategic framework for the 2050 horizon, grounded in empirical evidence and high-impact literature on digital inclusion and public transparency.

## Method

### Research Design

To respond to the proposed objectives, the present research adopts a qualitative approach of an exploratory and descriptive nature, in accordance with the methodological typology systematised by Minayo (2010) and Creswell (2014). The choice of this design is justified by the nature of the object of study, the right to information as a complex social phenomenon involving normative, economic, infrastructural, and cognitive dimensions, the understanding of which exceeds the possibilities of an exclusively quantitative approach.

Qualitative research proves particularly suited to the study of phenomena related to fundamental rights and social exclusion, as it allows for the unveiling of power relations, structural asymmetries, and the mechanisms of inequality reproduction that statistical methods, on their own, cannot capture (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). In the specific case of this study, the qualitative approach enables an in-depth analysis of the gap between the normative plane (legislation) and the factual reality (the digital barriers experienced by Angolan youth).

### Data Collection Procedures

The methodological design was structured on two complementary fronts, as recommended by the literature on applied social science research (Yin, 2018):

#### a) Bibliographic Research

A literature review was carried out using the Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and RCAAP (Open Access Scientific Repository of Portugal) databases. The following Boolean operator combinations were used, in Portuguese, English, Spanish, and French: (“right to information” OR “access to information” OR “freedom of information”) AND (“youth” OR “young people” OR “adolescents”) AND (“Africa” OR “Angola” OR “lusophone”) AND (“digital divide” OR “digital exclusion” OR “information literacy”).

The inclusion criteria adopted were: (i) articles published in indexed peer-reviewed journals; (ii) empirical studies or systematic reviews published between 1980 and 2025; (iii) works focused on Africa or on countries with levels of development comparable to those of Angola; (iv) grey literature (reports from international organisations and civil society) when relevant to the contextualisation of the Angolan case. Works without explicit reference to the right to information or digital exclusion were excluded.

After applying the criteria, 47 documents were selected for in-depth analysis, of which 28 are articles from indexed journals (Scopus/Web of Science), 12 are book chapters or academic books, and 7 are institutional reports (Freedom House<sup>1</sup>, UNDP<sup>2</sup>, Paradigm Initiative<sup>3</sup>, GSMA<sup>4</sup>).

#### b) Documentary Research

Primary sources of a legal and institutional nature were analysed, with emphasis on the Constitution of the Republic of Angola (2010), the Press Law (Law No. 1/17), and Presidential Decree No. 152/24 (setting the national minimum wage). Complementarily, the study drew on statistical reports from the National Statistics Institute (INE, 2022), market data from telecommunications operators (Unitel, Africell, Movitel), and reports from international organisations, namely Freedom House (2025), Paradigm Initiative (2024), and Trading Economics (2025).

### Data Analysis Technique

The treatment of the collected material followed the technique of content analysis, as advocated by Bardin (2011) and subsequently refined by Krippendorff (2004). This technique was operationalised in three phases:

<sup>1</sup> Freedom House is an international non-governmental organisation, founded in 1941 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., dedicated to the promotion of democracy, human rights, and civil liberties; the organisation produces the annual reports Freedom in the World and Freedom on the Net

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

<sup>3</sup> Paradigm Initiative is an African non-governmental organisation founded in 2007, dedicated to the promotion of digital rights and digital inclusion on the African continent; it produces the annual report Londa – Digital Rights and Inclusion in Africa.

<sup>4</sup> Global System for Mobile Communications Association.



1. **Pre-analysis:** preliminary reading of the material, constitution of the documentary corpus, and formulation of interpretative hypotheses;
2. **Exploration of the material:** coding and categorisation of the information into three main analytical axes: (i) economic barriers, (ii) infrastructural barriers, and (iii) information literacy barriers;
3. **Treatment of results:** inference and interpretation of the data in light of the adopted theoretical framework, with systematic comparison between what is provided for in legislation and the empirical data reported by the sources.

### Limitations of the Study

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the present research. Firstly, the study did not include direct empirical data collection (interviews, focus groups, or questionnaire surveys) from Angolan youth, which limits the capacity to capture the subjective perceptions and experiences of young people in relation to the right to information. Secondly, the analysis focused on secondary and documentary sources, which makes the study dependent on the quality and currency of data produced by third parties. Thirdly, the scarcity of empirical studies specifically focused on the Angolan case; a gap that the present work seeks to contribute to filling limits and the possibilities for intra-country comparison.

These limitations do not invalidate the results of the study but suggest directions for future research, namely the undertaking of large-scale surveys on patterns of access to information among Angolan youth and the conducting of in-depth qualitative studies on strategies of resistance and adaptation in the face of digital exclusion.

## Literature Review

### The Right to Information as a Presupposition of the Public Sphere

The right to information has been theorised in political science and constitutional law as a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for deliberative democracy. Dahl (1998) argues that effective civic participation is inseparable from access to quality information, for in its absence the citizen becomes incapable of making free and informed choices. Habermas (1989), in turn, situates access to information at the centre of his theory of the public sphere, where democratic health depends on the free and equal circulation of data that enable rational debate among citizens.

More recent studies have applied these theoretical frameworks to the African context, identifying specific tensions between formally democratic legal regimes and practices of administrative opacity inherited from authoritarian periods (Calland and Tilley, 2002; Mendel, 2017). Darch and Underwood (2010), in a comparative analysis of five African countries, demonstrate that the effectiveness of access to information laws is positively correlated with the existence of independent oversight mechanisms and with high levels of information literacy among the population. This finding is particularly relevant for Angola, where Pamba (2024) warns that the absence of specific regulation for access to information transforms constitutional precepts into merely declaratory norms, devoid of practical enforceability mechanisms.

### Digital Divide and Information Exclusion of Youth

The “digital divide”, a concept systematically explored by Norris (2001) and subsequently refined by Van Dijk (2019), must not be understood solely from the perspective of a technical lack of equipment or connectivity. On the contrary, recent empirical research demonstrates that digital exclusion is a manifestation of pre-existing social, economic, and political inequalities, which information and communication technologies tend to amplify when not accompanied by redistributive public policies (Hargittai, 2018; Robinson et al., 2020).

In the African context, large-scale studies have documented the emergence of a “generational digital exclusion”, in which young people paradoxically the age group with the greatest propensity for the use of mobile technologies, face structural barriers that limit their effective access to information (Porter et al., 2015; GSMA, 2023). For Angola, recent data indicate that, although more than 60% of the population is young, the internet penetration rate stood at only 33% in 2024, suggesting that the majority of Angolan youth are on the margins of the information society (Forbes África Lusófona, 2024). This exclusion is aggravated by the degradation of physical infrastructures for knowledge mediation, such as the case of the Provincial Library of Bengo, inoperative for more than four years (ANGOP, 2024) which configures what some authors have termed a structural “digital apartheid” (Paradigm Initiative, 2024).

### Comparative Law: Legal Frameworks in Southern and Lusophone Africa

In order to understand the depth of the need for reform in the Angolan legal order, it is imperative to analyse how other countries in the SADC region and CPLP have institutionalised the right to information. While the Constitution of the Republic of Angola (2010) provides the ethical and legal foundation, the absence of a specific administrative procedure law for access to government data creates a “vacuum of applicability”.

Angola lacks a “Law on Access to Information” (LAI) of a general nature. Reliance on the Press Law to mediate the information flow of the State is problematic, as it conditions access to information on the professional mediation of journalists, excluding the ordinary citizen from direct interaction with the data that govern public life.

**Table 1.**  
**Comparative Table of Access to Information Legislation in Africa**

COUNTRY	LEGAL INSTRUMENT	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
South Africa	Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000)	Considered one of the most advanced in the world; details procedures for the public and private sector; provides for independent appeal mechanisms
Nigeria	Freedom of Information Act (2011)	Establishes short deadlines (7 days) for response and sanctions for officials who obstruct access
Mozambique	Law No. 34/2014	Defines access to information as a right actionable by any citizen without the need to justify interest

Source: Prepared by the author (2026), based on the laws of the respective countries.

## Empirical Evidence on the Implementation of Access to Information Laws in Africa

Beyond the analysis of legal frameworks, high-impact literature has produced empirical evidence on the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective implementation of these laws. In a comparative study involving 12 African countries, Mendel (2003) demonstrated that the mere existence of access to information legislation does not correlate significantly with higher levels of perceived transparency, in the absence of three conditions: (i) the existence of access to information commissions with sanctioning powers; (ii) the undertaking of systematic information literacy campaigns directed at the population; and (iii) the effective protection of whistleblowers.

Calland and Tilley (2002), analysing the paradigmatic case of South Africa, argue that even the most advanced legislation on the continent, the Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000), has produced results below expectations due to the lack of political will for its full implementation. The author identifies a “culture of secrecy” embedded in South African public administration as the main barrier to the realisation of the right to information, a diagnosis that echoes the observations of Pamba (2024) regarding the Angolan case.

More recently, Ejitagha (2019) conducted an empirical study on the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria (2011), concluding that, ten years after its adoption, the majority of Nigerian citizens are unaware of the existence of the law and the procedures for invoking it. This knowledge deficit is particularly acute among young people, who, despite constituting the age group with the highest digital literacy, lack the skills to formulate information requests or to appeal against denial decisions.

This evidence has direct implications for Angola. The adoption of a General Law on Access to Information (LAI), currently absent from the Angolan legal order – constitutes a necessary step, but the experience of other African countries demonstrates that its impact will critically depend on articulation with information literacy policies, the creation of independent oversight mechanisms, and the promotion of cultural change in public administration.

## Discussion

The results of this study must be interpreted in light of the methodological limitations already stated, but also of the contributions they offer to the existing literature.

**Firstly**, the study confirms, for the Angolan case, the principal thesis of the literature on the implementation of access to information laws: the mere existence of favourable constitutional provisions does not automatically translate into effective transparency practices (Calland and Tilley, 2002; Mendel, 2003). The Angolan case is, in this respect, paradigmatic: the 2010 Constitution is among the most progressive on the African continent in matters of fundamental rights, yet the absence of regulatory legislation and the persistence of structural digital barriers neutralise much of its emancipatory potential.

**Secondly**, the study contributes to the literature on digital exclusion by demonstrating that, in contexts of structural poverty such as the Angolan one, the digital divide cannot be understood solely as a problem of “access” (first-level digital divide), but rather as a problem that simultaneously involves usage skills (second-level) and effective outcomes (third-level). The data analysed suggest that, even among the Angolan youth who have internet access, a minority subset of the population levels of information literacy are low, which renders them vulnerable to disinformation and limits their capacity to use information for civic participation purposes.

**Thirdly**, the study raises questions that the existing literature has treated insufficiently: what is the role of physical knowledge mediation infrastructures (public libraries, documentation centres) in a digital ecosystem dominated by mobile devices? The Angolan data suggest that, paradoxically, the degradation of these infrastructures is not compensated by the expansion of mobile access, precisely because connectivity costs remain prohibitive for the majority of the population. This finding suggests the need for policies that articulate the digital and the physical; the so-called “hybrid models” of access to information rather than treating them as substitutes.

5 Republic of South Africa. (2000). Promotion of Access to Information Act, No. 2 of 2000. Government Gazette. Promotion of Access to Information Act [No. 2 of 2000]

**Finally**, the study points to an unresolved tension in the literature between the emphasis on government transparency (right to know) and the material conditions that enable its effective exercise. As Florini (2007) observes, the right to information is, ultimately, a right of citizens who have the time, resources, and skills to exercise it. In a context such as the Angolan one, where youth face unemployment rates close to 50% and where daily survival is a priority that overrides civic participation, the guarantee of the right to information requires policies that simultaneously tackle the multiple dimensions of exclusion – economic, infrastructural, and cognitive – under penalty of the right being reduced to an empty formality.

## Strategic framework for Angola 2050

Beyond the identification of barriers and the proposal of intervention axes, it is important to define an operational framework that articulates priorities, deadlines, responsibilities, and success indicators. The matrix presented in Table 2 synthesises this strategic architecture, aligning the recommendations with the time horizons of the Angola 2050 Long-Term Strategy.

**Quadro 2.**  
**Strategic Implementation Matrix**

AXIS	PRIORITY	ESTIMATED DEADLINE	MAIN RESPONSIBLE PARTY(IES)	SUCCESS INDICATOR (KPI)
<b>Legal (General Law on Access to Information)</b>	Maximum (urgent)	1-2 years	National Assembly; Ministry of Justice	LAI approved and published; regulation approved within 6 months
<b>Economic (Social data tariff)</b>	High	2-3 years	MINTTICS; INACOM; Operators	Reduction of $\geq 50\%$ in cost for students; free package for academic portals
<b>Infrastructural (Libraries and access points)</b>	Medium-High	5-10 years	MINCULT; Provincial Governments; Universal Service Fund	100% of municipalities with free digital library
<b>Educational (Information literacy)</b>	Medium	5-15 years	Ministry of Education; Higher Education; INIDE	Literacy integrated into curriculum; $\geq 50\%$ of teachers trained by 2035

**Source:** Prepared by the author (2026).

### Indicative Timeline (2025–2050)

#### **Phase 1: Foundation (2025–2027):** Maximum priority

- Drafting and submission of the LAI preliminary bill
- Creation of an interministerial working group
- Approval of the LAI and its regulation
- Launch of a national awareness campaign

#### **Phase 2: Consolidation (2028–2035):** Infrastructure and tariffs

- Negotiation with operators for social data tariff
- National programme for the rehabilitation of municipal libraries
- First interim assessment (50% of municipalities with digital library)

#### **Phase 3: Sustaining (2036–2045):** Literacy and curriculum

- Integration of information literacy into the school curriculum
- National teacher training
- Second interim assessment (100% of municipalities with digital library)

#### **Phase 4: Maturity (2046–2050):** Final evaluation

- National study on patterns of access to information
- Review of the LAI based on international good practices
- National conference “Angola 2050: Information Society”

**Table 3.**  
Success Indicators (KPIs) by Phase

INDICATOR	BASELINE (2024)	TARGET (2030)	TARGET (2040)	TARGET (2050)
LAI approved	Does not exist	Yes	—	Updated revision
Cost of 1GB (% minimum wage)	~22%	≤10%	≤5%	≤2%
Municipalities with digital library	<10%	50%	100%	100%
Youth with information literacy	~15%	30%	60%	80%

Source: Prepared by the author (2026).

**Table 4.**  
Risks and Mitigation Measures

RISK	PROBABILITY	MITIGATION MEASURE
Legislative inertia	High	Civil society pressure; annual monitoring reports
Operator resistance	Medium	Regulation by INACOM; conditioning of licences
Lack of budget	High	Universal Service Fund; public-private partnerships
Political turnover	Medium	Institutionalise the framework by law

Source: Prepared by the author (2026).

## Final Considerations

- The present study has made it possible to ascertain that, although the right to information in Angola enjoys unquestionable constitutional dignity through the Constitution of the Republic of 2010, its realisation on the plane of factual reality remains an unresolved structural challenge. Returning to the premise established in the introduction – that this right constitutes a fundamental pillar for deliberative democracy and for full citizenship – the evidence analysed throughout this work suggests that the current information gap in Angola confines youth to a role of passive spectators, limiting their transformation into critical and sovereign agents of the public space.
- The critical analysis of the legislative framework revealed that the absence of a General Law on Access to Information (LAI) creates a procedural vacuum that weakens the ordinary citizen in the face of institutional opacity. Reliance on sectoral laws, such as the Press Law, proves insufficient to guarantee universal and direct access to public administration data.
- With regard to digital barriers, the research confirmed that the information exclusion of Angolan youth is not a mere technical deficit but rather a structured form of socioeconomic segregation. The cost of operator tariffs, which may consume more than 22% of the monthly income of a worker earning the minimum wage, combined with the degradation of physical knowledge infrastructures and the information literacy deficit, configures an ecosystem of exclusion that self-reproduces.
- The comparative analysis with other African countries and with high-impact literature reveals that the adoption of a LAI, although necessary, is far from sufficient. The effectiveness of the right to information depends critically on the existence of independent commissions, on information literacy campaigns, and, above all, on a change in administrative culture.
- The strategic framework outlined for the 2050 horizon – which articulates the institutionalisation of the LAI, the creation of social data tariffs, the rehabilitation of free internet access points, and the integration of information literacy into the school curriculum, does not constitute an exercise in technological utopia but rather an imperative for democratic survival. The interdependence between the legislative, economic, infrastructural, and educational axes is such that the isolation of any one of these dimensions would compromise the systemic outcome.
- Future studies should: (i) quantify, through mixed methods, the correlation between socioeconomic variables and patterns of access to information; (ii) conduct in-depth qualitative studies on the everyday information practices of Angolan youth; and (iii) evaluate, through quasi-experimental designs, the impact of information literacy interventions on levels of civic participation.
- This study does not intend to close the discussion on the right to information in Angola. It offers, however, a robust diagnosis, anchored in high-impact literature and in available empirical evidence, as well as a strategic roadmap so that, by 2050, the right to information in Angola ceases to be an unfulfilled constitutional promise and becomes a daily tool of emancipation for its youth.

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