RESEARCH REPORT

LEFT BEHIND BY DESIGN:

WHY YOUTUBE MUST EXTEND ITS PARTNER PROGRAM TO SOMALI CONTENT CREATORS

A Policy and Economic Equity Analysis

Abdinur Ali Mohamed, PhD
Executive Director
Baraarug Consulting Firm

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Baraarug Consulting Firm
Phone: +252-613-685-943
Email: info@bcf.so
Website: www.bcf.so

Abstract

This research report examines the systemic exclusion of Somali content creators from the YouTube Partner Program (YPP). It presents a comprehensive evidence-based argument for the immediate expansion of YPP eligibility to Somalia. The data for this study are drawn from 10 leading Somali-language YouTube channels with a combined subscriber base exceeding 21 million, alongside a comparative analysis of African peer channels and Somalia's broader digital economy. This report demonstrates that the current policy inflicts measurable economic harm on Somali creators. It also forces a documented pattern of creative talent displacement and contradicts YouTube's stated mission.

The report finds that the ten channels analyzed generate an estimated $77,200 to $221,000 per month in advertising revenue. None of this revenue is paid directly to creators based in Somalia because the country is not listed among YouTube's approximately 120 eligible Partner Program markets. Somali creators are consequently compelled to register and operate from countries including Malaysia, Norway, the United States, and Kenya in order to access any form of direct platform payment.

A systematic comparison with African peer channels of comparable subscriber counts in YPP-eligible nations reveals an earnings gap that cannot be attributed to content quality, audience size, or engagement rates. The gap is entirely attributable to geography and policy. The report also shows that Somalia possesses the digital infrastructure, mobile financial systems, youth demographics, and diaspora advertiser base to sustain a viable creator economy if YouTube acts.

Four actionable policy recommendations are advanced: formal YPP expansion to Somalia; an interim creator payment fund; transparent expansion criteria; and targeted development of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) advertiser ecosystems to close the African Cost Per Mille (CPM) gap.

Keywords: YouTube Partner Program, Somali content creators, digital monetization, creator economy, Africa, platform equity, mobile money, diaspora media

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, Somali-language content creators have emerged as one of the most prolific and commercially significant communities on YouTube. Somali-language channels producing news, music, drama, comedy, film, and cultural commentary have amassed subscriber bases. These audiences rival major broadcast networks across East Africa, as evidenced by the ten channels examined in this report. These channels collectively attract more than 17 million subscribers and generate hundreds of millions of cumulative views.

Yet a structural inequity pervades this success. Somalia is not listed among the approximately 120 countries and territories where YouTube's Partner Program (YPP) is available. As a direct consequence, a content creator based in Somalia — regardless of audience size, content quality, or engagement rate — cannot receive direct advertising revenue through official YouTube channels. The platform runs advertisements on their videos. It collects 45 percent revenue share, and the creator receives nothing unless they are registered in an eligible country.

This policy has produced a documented pattern of displacement. As this report demonstrates, every major Somali YouTube channel in the top tier is managed from outside Somalia: from Malaysia, Norway, the United States, and Kenya. The creators who built these channels did not leave Somalia because they wanted to. They left, or are operating through diaspora intermediaries, because YouTube's eligibility rules gave them no economically viable alternative.

This report makes three contributions. First, it documents the scale and economic significance of the Somali YouTube creator ecosystem through data drawn from multiple analytics platforms. Second, it demonstrates through systematic comparison with African peer channels that the earnings disparity facing Somali creators is attributable entirely to policy, not performance. Third, it presents the case that Somalia has the digital infrastructure, financial systems, youth demographics, and advertiser market to support a functioning creator economy. This report advances four specific policy recommendations for YouTube to act upon.

The structure of the report is as follows. Section 2 provides methodology; Section 3 provides background on the YouTube Partner Program and documents Somalia's exclusion. Section 4 profiles the Somali creator ecosystem and its economic scale. Section 5 presents the African comparative analysis. Section 6 examines Somalia's digital landscape and advertising opportunity. Section 7 advances the policy arguments for immediate action. Section 8 sets out formal recommendations. Section 9 concludes.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Strategy

This study adopts a mixed-method research design that integrates quantitative revenue estimation with structured comparative analysis. The quantitative component uses Cost Per Mille (CPM)-based modelling to project monthly earnings from channel-level performance data, while the comparative dimension systematically benchmarks leading Somali YouTube channels against African counterparts operating under full YouTube Partner Program (YPP) access. The study combines these two approaches. This design isolates the policy effect of Somalia's YPP exclusion from underlying variations in content quality, audience size, or creator output — producing findings that are both empirically grounded and directly relevant to digital economy policymaking.

2.2 Sample Selection

The primary sample comprises ten leading Somali YouTube channels, selected through a purposive sampling strategy. Three criteria that guided the selection were subscriber size, operational viability, and Somali language content. This study selected channels with at least one million subscribers, consistent upload activity over the preceding twelve months, and a predominant focus on Somali-language content. This ensures the channels examined are active and genuinely serve the Somali digital public. They are not primarily diaspora audiences consuming content in other languages. This cohort represents the creators who are structurally positioned to benefit from YPP access and is the most policy-relevant group for the purposes of this analysis. Table 1 below presents the full sample alongside estimated monthly revenue ranges.

Table 1: Sample of Somali YouTube Channels

Channel	Subscribers	Content Niche
Som_Youtuber1	3,640,000	General / Lifestyle
Som_Youtuber2	3,020,000	General / Entertainment
Som_Youtuber3	2,650,000	Music
Som_Youtuber4	2,220,000	General/Sports
Som_Youtuber5	2,090,000	News / Politics
Som_Youtuber6	1,830,000	Television / Media
Som_Youtuber6	1,620,000	Film / Entertainment
Som_Youtuber9	1,780,000	Entertainment
Som_Youtuber8	1,490,000	Films / Vlogs
Som_Youtuber10	1,330,000	Entertainment
COMBINED TOTAL	**21,670,000**	

Source: HypeAuditor, Starstat, vidIQ, and youtubers.me.
All figures are modeled third-party estimates and do not represent verified creator earnings.

2.3 Data Sources and Revenue Estimation

YouTube does not publish creator-level earnings data, so this study draws data from four widely used third-party analytics platforms: HypeAuditor, Starstat, vidIQ, and youtubers.me. Each platform constructs estimates using proprietary models based on publicly observable metrics, including view counts, subscriber growth, and engagement rates. Where estimates diverged across platforms, both lower- and upper-bound figures are reported, with the midpoint used as the primary reference value. Revenue is estimated using the CPM model: $\text{Estimated Revenue} = \text{Monthly Views} \times \text{CPM Rate})/1{,}000.$ The range of \$0.50 to \$3.00 applied, consistent with published benchmarks for Somali diaspora content reaching audiences concentrated in high-income Western markets.

2.4 Comparative Framework and Analytical Method

To contextualize the revenue estimates, Somali channels are matched against African counterparts from YPP-eligible markets, including Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa, on subscriber base and content niche. This like-for-like design controls for audience size and content type, isolating monetization policy access as the key differentiating variable. Analysis proceeds through three complementary methods: descriptive statistics summaries channel-level performance characteristics; comparative ratio analysis computes revenue-to-view ratios and earnings-per-subscriber indices across both channel groups; and case-based comparisons provide paired channel illustrations that ground the aggregate findings in concrete creator-level realities.

2.5 Limitations

This study is constrained by four limitations. First, YouTube discloses no creator earnings publicly; all revenue figures are estimates, and third-party approximations carry inherent uncertainty. Second, CPM rates vary based on location, season, and advertiser demand; benchmarks are reasonable approximations. Third, third-party platforms are based on proprietary algorithms of variable transparency, which is alleviated with cross-platform triangulation and range-based reporting. Fourth, the comparative framework is unable to completely explain heterogeneity like the quality of production, the frequency of upload, or algorithmic promotion. Findings should therefore be interpreted as indicative of the economic order of magnitude of YPP exclusion's impact on the Somali digital economy, rather than as precise causal estimates.

3. Background: The YouTube Partner Program and Somalia

3.1 How the YouTube Partner Program Operates

The YouTube Partner Program (YPP) is the primary mechanism through which content creators monetize their work on the platform. Admitted channels receive a share of advertising revenue generated from their videos, access to channel memberships, Super Chat, Super Stickers, and YouTube Shopping integrations. To qualify for the full program, a channel must accumulate at least 1,000 subscribers and 4,000 valid public watch hours in the preceding twelve months. It must also comply with all YouTube policies, maintain an active AdSense account, and be based in a country designated by YouTube as an eligible market. YouTube has progressively expanded YPP availability since its inception. In 2026, the program covers approximately 120 countries and territories across North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. In Africa specifically, the program is available in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, and among other markets. This expansion has enabled significant growth in African creator economies across multiple countries.

3.2 Somalia's Exclusion from the YPP

As of April 2026, Somalia does not appear on YouTube's official list of YPP-eligible markets[1]. This means that a creator residing in Somalia and applying for the YPP through a Somali address will be rejected at the eligibility screening stage, regardless of their subscriber count, watch hours, or content quality. The exclusion is absolute: there is no partial access, no provisional status, and no published timeline for inclusion.

YouTube has not publicly explained the specific rationale for Somalia's exclusion. The platform's general statements on YPP expansion cite factors including the availability of local banking and payment infrastructure, regulatory environments, and market readiness. This report addresses each of these factors directly in Section 6 and finds that the stated barriers do not withstand scrutiny in the Somali context as of 2026.

The practical consequence of this exclusion is well understood within the Somali creator community and widely documented in informal discussions across creator networks: to earn from YouTube, a Somali creator must effectively leave Somalia.

The ten channels examined in this report, all producing Somali-language content primarily for Somali audiences, are registered and operated from countries including Malaysia, Norway, the United States, and Kenya. This outcome is not incidental. It is the direct, predictable, and documented outcome of a policy that makes economic participation contingent on emigration.

[1] YPP eligible Countries

Key Finding 3.2: Every major Somali-language YouTube channel earning direct advertising revenue is registered in a country other than Somalia. This is not a coincidence. It is the structural consequence of YouTube's exclusion of Somalia from its Partner Program.

3.3 Somalia's Digital Landscape

Somalia's exclusion from the YPP is particularly consequential given the country's demographic and digital profile. According to DataReportal's Digital 2025: Somalia report, as of January 2025 Somalia had 10.7 million internet users, representing 55.2 per cent of the total population[2]. The country's population of approximately 19.3 million is among the youngest in the world, with an estimated 70 per cent under the age of 30[3]. Social media user identities numbered 3.05 million in January 2025, growing at approximately 4.7 per cent year-on-year.

Mobile connectivity is advanced relative to Somalia's broader development indicators. Some 72.7 per cent of mobile connections operate on broadband networks (3G, 4G, or 5G), and 85 per cent of adults own a mobile phone. Mobile financial services are the dominant payment infrastructure: an estimated 82 per cent of adults use mobile phones for financial transactions, and mobile money market penetration stands at approximately 73 per cent[4]. The country's largest telecom operator, Hormuud Telecom, handles hundreds of millions of transactions monthly through its EVC Plus mobile money system.

These data points collectively challenge the narrative that Somalia lacks the infrastructure to support YouTube monetization. The relevant infrastructure for creator payments such as digital connectivity, mobile financial services, and international payment network, exists and operates at scale.

[2] Digital 2025: Somalia.
[3] Country Focus Report 2024 – Somalia (AfDB)
[4] Somalia – ICT Sector Overview (US Trade.gov)

4. The Somali Creator Ecosystem: Scale and Revenue

4.1 Channel Overview and Estimated Earnings

The following table presents data for ten leading Somali-language YouTube channels. Subscriber counts are drawn from live platform data as of April 2026. Monthly earnings estimates are derived from multiple third-party analytics platforms, such as HypeAuditor, Starstat.yt, vidIQ, youtubers.me, and represent estimated advertising revenue ranges based on view count and CPM modeling. These figures are estimates and do not represent official disclosures; actual earnings will vary based on actual CPM rates, audience geography, and monetization configurations.

Table 2: Somali YouTube Channels — Subscriber Data and Estimated Monthly Revenue

Channel	Subscribers	Min/Month (USD)	Max/Month (USD)	Country of Operation
Som_Youtuber1	3,640,000	$8,900	$23,000	Malaysia
Som_Youtuber2	3,020,000	$18,000	$40,000	Malaysia
Som_Youtuber3	2,650,000	$15,000	$50,000	Kenya
Som_Youtuber4	2,220,000	$5,000	$18,000	Diaspora
Som_Youtuber5	2,090,000	$13,000	$40,000	United States
Som_Youtuber6	1,620,000	$10,000	$25,000	Norway
Som_Youtuber7	1,830,000	$5,000	$15,000	Somalia / Kenya
Som_Youtuber8	1,490,000	$1,000	$5,000	Diaspora
Som_Youtuber9	1,780,000	$800	$3,000	Diaspora
Som_Yoeutuber10	1,330,000	$500	$2,000	Diaspora
COMBINED TOTAL	—	**$77,200**	**$221,000**	—

Table 2. Sources: HypeAuditor (April 2026); Starstat.yt (March 2026); vidIQ; youtubers.me. All earnings figures are estimates. Country of operation refers to the country from which the channel's AdSense account is registered, not the creator's country of origin which is Somalia.

As Table 2 demonstrates, the combined estimated monthly advertising revenue generated by these 10 channels ranges from approximately $77,200 to $221,000. Annualized, this represents an estimated $926,400 to $2,652,000 in advertising revenue. Not one dollar of this revenue accrues to a creator registered in Somalia.

The per-channel figures reveal significant variation, reflecting differences in upload frequency, audience geography, content niche, and the CPM rates associated with each channel's viewer base. Channels with substantial diaspora audiences in the United States, Norway, and the United Kingdom benefit from markedly higher per-view advertising rates than channels whose viewership is concentrated in East Africa, as analyzed in detail in Section 4.

4.2 The Displacement Phenomenon

The most significant finding from Table 2 is not the revenue figures themselves, but the 'Country of Operation' column. Without exception, every channel earning direct YouTube advertising revenue is registered from outside Somalia. This is not the result of creators' personal preferences or lifestyle choices. It is the rational, predictable response to a policy that makes registration in Somalia financially unviable.

Som_Youtuber1, with 3.6 million subscribers, the largest individual following of any channel in this study, operates from Malaysia. Som_Youtuber2, which has been producing Somali-language content since 2012 and has accumulated over 1.7 billion lifetime views, is likewise registered in Malaysia. Som_Youtuber6, a film-focused channel with 1.6 million subscribers and an overwhelmingly Somali-speaking audience, is based in Norway. Som_Youtuber5, one of the most prominent Somali news channels on the platform, operates from the United States.

This geographic displacement has consequences beyond the individual creators' finances. Each displaced creator represents lost economic activity. It also reflects the loss of cultural production capacity and institutional knowledge that would otherwise remain in Somalia. In a country where youth unemployment exceeds 30 percent, the creative sector represents one of the few scalable employment pathways. This displacement constitutes a measurable development cost.

> Key Finding 4.2: The displacement of Somali creators is not voluntary. It is the direct, documented consequence of YouTube's policy of excluding Somalia from the YPP. Every creator who leaves Somalia to access payment is a market failure created by platform policy, not by market conditions.

5. Comparative Analysis: Somali Channels vs. African Peers

5.1 The CPM Geography Problem

The most important structural variable determining a YouTube creator's earnings is not subscriber count, content quality, or upload frequency. It is viewer geography. Advertising cost-per-mille (CPM) rates, the amount advertisers pay per one thousand ad impressions, vary dramatically by the country from which a viewer is watching. Viewers in the United States generate CPMs of $12–$15; viewers in Somalia generate approximately $0.30–$0.80 per thousand views, a differential of more than 20 to 1 (see Weetracker, 2020; vidIQ research; creator-reported data).

For Somali channels, this geography problem manifests in a critically important way: they are not primarily dependent on in-country Somali viewers for revenue. Their diaspora audiences in Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada generate premium CPM rates comparable to the highest in the world. A viewer in Oslo watching a Somali music channel on YouTube generates the same advertiser revenue as any other Norwegian viewer. That revenue exists. It is real. And it cannot be collected by a creator registered in Somalia.

Figure 1: CPM rates by viewer location (USD per 1,000 views)

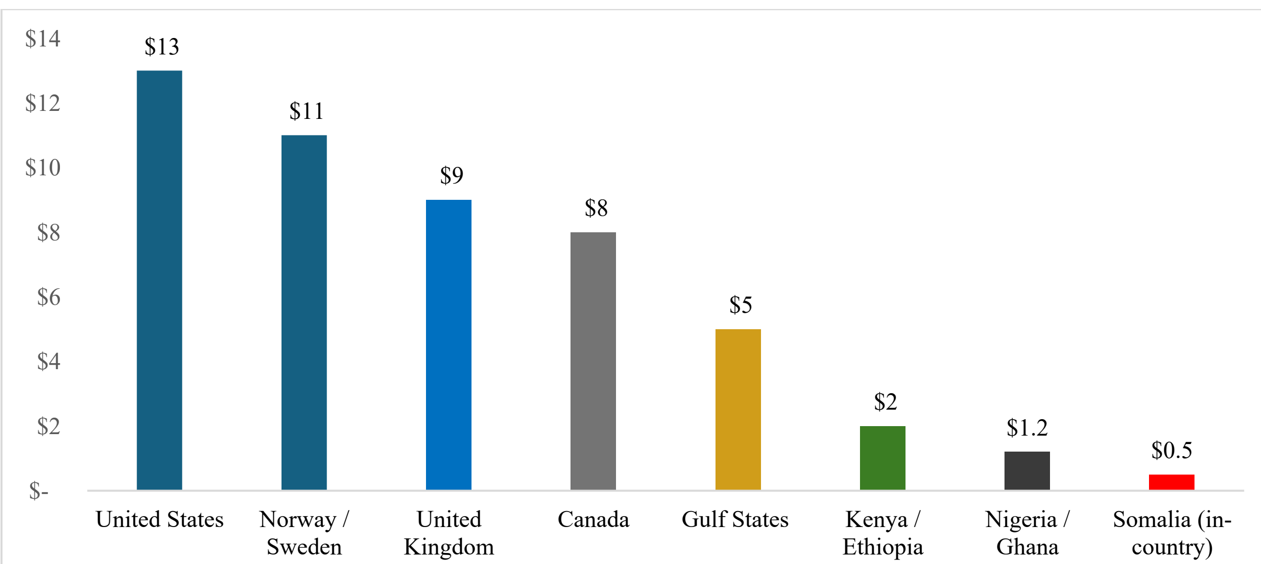


Figure 1. CPM rates are estimates based on industry data and creator-reported figures. Sources: Weetracker (2020); vidIQ research; creator community reporting.

5.2 Side-by-Side Comparison with African Peer Channels

To isolate the effect of YPP policy from content performance factors, Table 3 places Somali channels directly alongside African peer channels of comparable subscriber counts operating in YPP-eligible nations. The comparison controls for audience size by pairing channels within similar subscriber ranges. Differences in estimated monthly earnings persist even after controlling for subscriber-count. These differences can be primarily attributed to YPP access, audience geography, and CPM structure rather than to content quality or creator skill.

Somali channels are indicated with an asterisk (*) in the Country column, denoting that the country listed is the country of YPP registration, not the creator's country of origin or cultural identity. All channels in the table are Somali in cultural identity and primarily serve Somali-speaking audiences.

Table 3: Comparison of Somali Channels vs. African Peer Channels (Subscriber-Matched Earnings)

Channel	Country	Subscribers	YPP Status	Est. Min/Mo	Est. Max/Mo	Niche
Som_Youtuber1	Via Malaysia*	3.6M	**Via MY**	$8,900	**$23,000**	Lifestyle
Anes Tina	Algeria	3.4M	**Full**	$25,000	$55,000	Comedy
Som_Youtuber2	Via Malaysia*	3.0M	**Via MY**	$18,000	**$40,000**	General
SamSpedy	Nigeria	2.0M	**Full**	$20,000	$50,000	Comedy
Som_Youtuber3	Via Kenya*	2.65M	**Via KE**	$15,000	**$50,000**	Music
Njugush	Kenya	1.5M	**Full**	$10,000	$40,000	Comedy
Som_Youtuber9	Diaspora*	1.78M	**BLOCKED**	$800	**$3,000**	Entertain.
Anne Kansiime	Uganda	1.4M	**Full**	$25,000	$60,000	Comedy
Som_Youtuber6	SO / Kenya*	1.83M	**Limited**	$5,000	**$15,000**	TV/Media
Lil Dancer Chris	Tanzania	1.1M	**Full**	$8,000	$20,000	Dance
Som_Youtuber6	Via Norway*	1.6M	**Via NO**	$10,000	**$25,000**	Film
Michael Jamison	South Africa	1.15M	**Full**	$10,000	$25,000	Lifestyle

*Table 3. Somali channels are shaded in light red. * Country denotes country of YPP registration, not country of origin. YPP status indicates earnings are accessible only through a foreign registration. Sources: HypeAuditor; Starstat.yt; CediRates; SEO Sandwitch; vidIQ; The Exchange Africa.*

The data in Table 3 reveal a consistent and striking pattern. Som_Youtuber9, with 1.78 million subscribers, has a larger audience than Uganda's Anne Kansiime, who has 1.3 million subscribers. Yet Som_Youtuber9 earns an estimated $800–$3,000 per month against Kansiime's estimated $25,000–$60,000. This represents a ratio of approximately 1:20 at the maximum estimate, a gap that cannot be explained by content quality, audience engagement, or any metric intrinsic to the channels' performance. It is explained entirely by the different YPP access and audience geography resulting from each creator's country of operation.

Similarly, Anes Tina of Algeria, with 3.0 million subscribers, earns an estimated $25,000–$55,000 per month through full, direct YPP access. Som_Youtuber1, a Somali creator with 3.6 million subscribers, a larger audience, earns an estimated $8,900–$23,000 per month, and only because he is registered in Malaysia. Had Som_Youtuber1 remained in Somalia, his estimated monthly earnings would be zero.

Key Finding 5.2: The earnings gap between Somali channels and comparable African peer channels is not a function of content quality, audience size, or engagement. It is entirely a function of YPP eligibility and audience geography. The policy is the variable.

The reports compare Somali creators with their African counterparts in terms of viewership and earnings. The results reveal a clear imbalance. For example, Som_Youtuber1 (Somalia) has more subscribers and views than Anes Tina (Algeria). Som_Youtuber1 has 3.6 million subscribers compared to Tina's 3.4 million, and his content has been viewed 675 million times, while Tina's content has 450 million views. However, despite stronger performance, Som_Youtuber1 earns only about $8,900–$23,000, whereas Tina earns between $25k–$55k. This means Tina earns approximately 2.7 times more than Som_Youtuber1, even with lower engagement. The difference is largely explained by geographic factors.

A similar pattern appears with Som_Youtuber9 (Somalia) and Anne Kansiime (Uganda). Som_Youtuber9 has 1.78 million subscribers, while Kansiime has 1.4 million. Although Kansiime has only about 0.7 times as many views, her earnings are nearly 7 times higher than Som_Youtuber9's. This again shows that revenue is not aligned with audience size or engagement.

In another case, Som_Youtuber6 (Somalia) has 1.83 million subscribers and 297 million views, compared to Kigali Today (Rwanda), which has 500,000 subscribers and 80 million views. Despite Som_Youtuber6 having significantly higher reach, both channels generate similar earnings. This suggests that factors beyond performance—particularly geography and advertising markets—play a decisive role in determining revenue.

Table 4: Head-to-Head Comparison of Somali Channels vs. African Peer Channels

Somali channel	African peer	Subscribers	Somali views	African views	Somali earnings	African earnings	Gap	Note
Som_Youtuber1	Anes Tina (Algeria)	3.6M vs 3.4M	**675M+**	**450M+**	**$8.9K–$23K**	**$25K–$55K**	**2.7×**	Same subs: Somali earns <half
Som_Youtuber2	SamSpedy (Nigeria)	2.9M vs 4.4M	**1.69B+**	**1.67B+**	**$18K–$40K**	**$20K–$50K**	**Comparable***	*Malaysia reg. only
Som_Youtuber9	Anne Kansiime (Uganda)	1.78M vs 1.4M	**148M+**	**200M+**	**$800–$3K**	**$7.4K–$20K**	**7×**	More subs; far less pay
Som_Youtuber6	Kigali Today (Rwanda)	1.83M vs 500K	**297M+**	**80M+**	**$5K–$15K**	**$3K–$10K**	**Similar***	*SO base limits earnings
Som_Youtuber6	Lil Dancer Chris (TZ)	1.6M vs 1.1M	**208M+**	**200M+**	**$10K–$25K**	**$8K–$20K**	**Comparable***	*Norway reg. only
Som_Youtuber5	RakGhana (Ghana)	2.0M vs 600K	**231M+**	**100M+**	**$13K–$40K**	**$5K–$15K**	**Comparable***	*USA reg. only
Som_Youtuber3	CKay (Nigeria)	2.6M vs 4.3M	**451M+**	**1.78B+**	**$15K–$50K**	**$12K–$40K**	**Comparable***	*Kenya reg. only

Table 4. Somali rows in red. 'Comparable' (amber) = similar earnings ONLY because creator is registered abroad. Without foreign registration, earnings = $0. Sources: HypeAuditor; Starstat.yt; SPEAKRJ; youtubers.me.*

5.3 Lifetime earnings: the long-term cost of exclusion

The comparison across African and Somali-linked channels shows that earnings are not aligned with views but are strongly influenced by geography and monetization access. In well-monetized markets, performance and revenue are relatively consistent: for example, Mark Angel Comedy (Nigeria) with over 2 billion views earned $4.18 million, and Oum Walid (Algeria) with 3 billion views earned $4.9 million.

However, disparities appear among mid-tier creators, as Michael Jamison (South Africa) earned $1.06 million from 300 million views, while Masaka Kids (Uganda), with 778 million views, earned only $1.34 million. A notable case is Som_Youtuber2 , a Somali channel monetized via Malaysia, which earned about $2.05 million from 1.69 billion views, showing the strong impact of monetization location. Among smaller channels, earnings are relatively consistent in monetized markets, but Som_Youtuber9 (Somali, diaspora/blocked) earned only about $150,000 from 148 million views, far less than peers such as RakGhana (Ghana), which earned more with fewer views, highlighting a clear disadvantage driven by geography rather than performance.

In contrast, Som_Youtuber9 (Somali, diaspora/blocked) has 148 million views but has earned only about $150,000. This is significantly lower compared to peers. For example, RakGhana earns more with fewer views, and Tanzanian and Kenyan channels earn several times more with comparable or slightly higher viewership.

Key Finding 5.3: Mark Angel Comedy (Nigeria) has earned $4.18 million lifetime from 2 billion views. Som_Youtuber2 (Somali, via Malaysia) earns $2.05 million from 1.69 billion views. Per-view, Som_Youtuber2 earns less. If operated from Somalia, its lifetime earnings would be $0.

Table 5: Lifetime Earnings Comparison of African Channels vs. Somali Channels

Channel	YPP country	Total views	Lifetime earnings	Context
Mark Angel Comedy (Nigeria)	Nigeria	2 billion+	**$4.18 million**	Full YPP; every view monetized since 2013
Oum Walid (Algeria)	Algeria	3 billion+	**$4.90 million**	Full YPP; highest-earning African channel
Burna Boy (Nigeria)	Nigeria	3.2 billion+	**$3.5 million**	Full YPP; music channel premium CPM
Michael Jamison (S. Africa)	S. Africa	300 million	**$1.06 million**	Full YPP; 1.15M subs — half of Waqal.
Masaka Kids (Uganda)	Uganda	778 million	**$1.34 million**	Full YPP; children's content since 2013
Som_Youtuber2 (Somali→MY)	Via Malaysia	1.69 billion	**$2.05 million**	Only earns via Malaysian registration
Lil Dancer Chris (Tanzania)	Tanzania	200 million	**$644,000**	Full YPP; 1.1M subs
RUS Love in Action (Kenya)	Kenya	300 million	**$656,000**	Full YPP — top earning Kenyan channel
RakGhana (Ghana)	Ghana	100 million	**$207,000**	Full YPP; paid on every view
Som_Youtuber9 (Somali→blocked)	Diaspora	148 million	**$150,000 est.**	Severely underpaid; blocked from SO

Table 5. Somali rows in red. Sources: CediRates (February 2026); Starstat.yt; youtubers.me; Culture Custodian.

5.4 YPP Eligibility Across Africa

As of April 2026, the following African nations are included in the YouTube Partner Program: Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. This list encompasses the vast majority of Sub-Saharan African countries with significant creator communities, including all of Somalia's immediate regional neighbors with the exception of Eritrea.

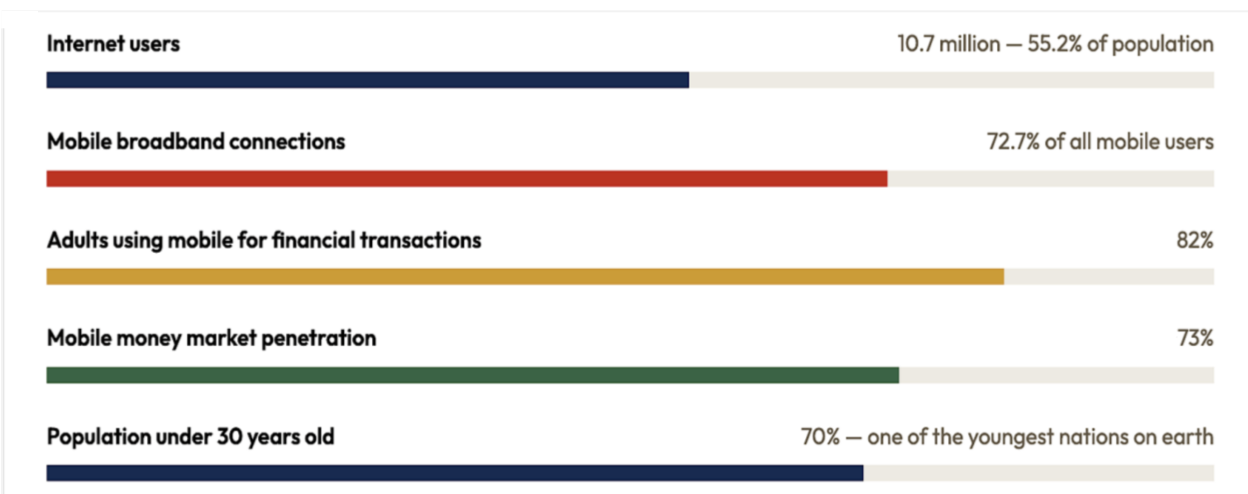
Notably, countries facing comparable banking infrastructure challenges, are included in the YPP. Uganda, where mobile money rather than traditional banking dominates financial services, is included. The precedent for expanding YPP to African markets with mobile-first financial infrastructure is well established. Somalia's absence from this list is not technically mandated; it is a policy choice.

6. Somalia's Digital and Advertising Opportunity

6.1 Digital Infrastructure and Demographics

A comprehensive assessment of Somalia's digital infrastructure and demographic profile demonstrates that the country meets or exceeds the preconditions for a functioning creator economy. Figure 2 summarizes the key indicators.

Figure 2: Somalia's digital profile in 2025



Sources: DataReportal Digital 2025: Somalia; World Bank; US Trade.gov ICT report.

The data in Figure 2 establishes several facts directly relevant to YouTube's YPP expansion criteria. First, Somalia's internet user base of 10.7 million is substantial and growing rapidly. Second, mobile broadband penetration of 72.7 percent demonstrates the connectivity infrastructure necessary for video content consumption. Third, and most consequentially, mobile money penetration of 73 percent and the prevalence of mobile financial transactions among 82 percent of adults establish that Somalia has a functional digital payment infrastructure. The mobile money operators, Hormuud Telecom's EVC Plus, Dahabshiil, Golis, Telesom, and Somtel, collectively handle billions of dollars in monthly transactions and operate internationally[5].

As the US State Department's 2025 Investment Climate Statement for Somalia notes, 'remittances remain a cornerstone of Somalia's economy, contributing an estimated $2 billion annually[6]. These funds flow overwhelmingly through mobile money and hawala networks, processed by the same operators that could serve as payment partners for a YouTube YPP expansion. The payment infrastructure argument against including Somalia does not withstand scrutiny.

6.2 The Somali Diaspora as a Premium Advertising Market

Approximately two million Somalis live outside Somalia, concentrated in the United Kingdom (250,000), the United States (170,000), Sweden (85,000), Canada (50,000), Norway (45,000), and the Netherlands (40,000). These figures are approximations. Somali communities are also in Finland, Denmark, Germany, Australia, and the Gulf states. These diaspora communities are active YouTube consumers of Somali-language content.

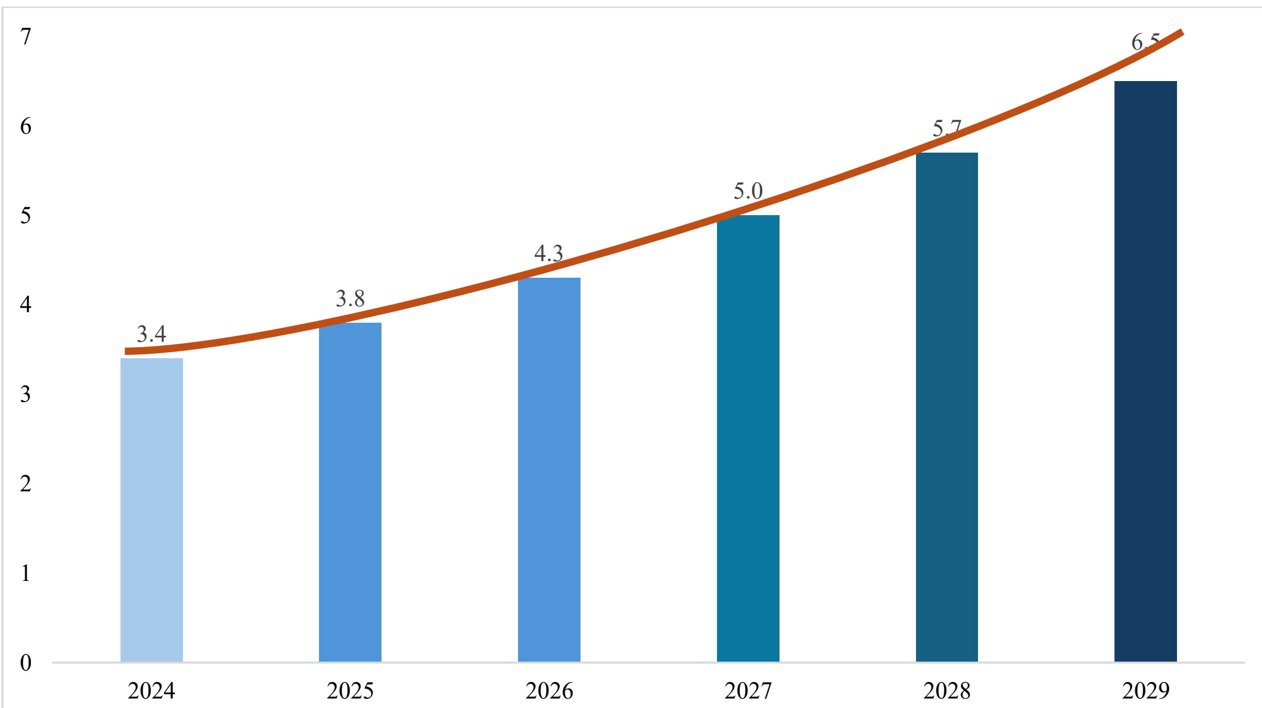
From an advertising perspective, diaspora viewers represent a highly valuable audience. A Somali viewer in Oslo generates the same Norwegian CPM rate ($11 per thousand views) as any other Norwegian viewer. A Somali viewer in Minneapolis generates a US CPM rate ($13 per thousand views). These are among the highest advertising rates on the platform. Somali YouTube channels, by virtue of serving a diaspora audience distributed across premium markets, already demonstrate the revenue characteristics of channels with primarily Western audiences. The commercial case for YPP inclusion is strong on the basis of diaspora audience alone, independent of the in-country Somali viewer base.

6.3 East African Digital Advertising Market Growth

[5] World Bank (2024)
[6] Somalia Investment Climate Statement 2025

Somalia sits at the heart of one of the world's fastest-growing digital advertising regions: East Africa. Africa's digital advertising market has experienced robust growth, achieving a CAGR of 9.4% during 2020–2024, and is forecast to grow at an accelerated CAGR of 14.6% from 2025 to 2029, expanding from $3.4 billion in 2024 to approximately $6.5 billion by 2029[7]. Within this continental surge, East Africa is emerging as a particularly dynamic sub-region. Kenya's internet advertising market alone is projected to grow at a CAGR of 16% — the fastest of any market globally — driven by rapid mobile-first internet adoption[8]. Figure 3 presents the growth trajectory of the broader African digital advertising market.

Figure 3: Africa Digital Advertising Market Growth (2024–2029)



Sources: PayNXT360 Africa Digital Ad Spend Databook Q4 2025; ResearchAndMarkets Africa Digital Ad Spend Q1 2026 Update.

This trajectory is directly relevant to the commercial case for YPP expansion. Kenya, Ethiopia, and other East African markets are seeing rapid growth in creator-led digital commerce, with local publishers and agencies scaling vernacular-first content production to enable advertisers to reach regionally distinct audiences[9]. As brands across the region increase their digital advertising budgets and shift toward mobile-first, language-specific content strategies, the demand for Somali-language channels capable of

[7] Africa Digital Ad Spend Market Size & Forecast by Spend Value.
[8] Perspectives from the Africa Entertainment and Media Outlook 2025–2029.
[9] Africa Digital Ad Spend Business Report 206.

reaching Somali-speaking consumers, both within Somalia and across the diaspora, is growing correspondingly. The advertiser demand for Somali-language digital content exists. The supply exists. The mechanism to efficiently connect the two — a functional YPP for Somali creators — is the missing element.

6.4 Advertiser Categories and Commercial Opportunity

The following categories of advertisers represent the most significant commercial opportunity for Somali YouTube content in a YPP-enabled environment:

- **Telecommunications and mobile money operators:** Hormuud Telecom, Golis, Somtel, Telesom, and international operators, including Safaricom, actively seek digital channels to reach mobile-first Somali consumers. YouTube campaigns targeting Somali-language content would align directly with their customer acquisition strategies.
- **Remittance and financial services:** The companies managing Somalia's $2 billion annual remittance flow, Taaj, Dahabshiil, World Remit, and others, compete actively for the business of diaspora senders and domestic recipients. Both groups watch a large amount of YouTube Somali content.
- **Gulf and MENA consumer brands:** Saudi, UAE, and Qatari consumer brands seek Somali-language reach owing to Somalia's deep cultural and commercial ties to the Gulf region. Somali diaspora communities in the Gulf are in the hundreds of thousands.
- **Diaspora-facing professional services:** Legal, immigration, insurance, education, and real estate services targeting Somali diaspora communities in the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, and the United States are chronically underserved by digital advertising. Somali YouTube channels reach this audience precisely.
- **International development organizations, including** UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Program, and international NGOs operating in the Horn of Africa, regularly seek trusted channels for public health, humanitarian, and information campaigns in Somali.
- **Entertainment and streaming platforms:** OTT platforms and streaming services expanding into East Africa and the MENA market view the Somali-speaking community as a priority demographic. Programmatic YouTube advertising is their primary mechanism for reaching audiences.

The breadth of these advertiser categories, and the scale of advertising budgets they collectively represent, indicate that a functioning Somali creator economy on YouTube would attract robust commercial interest. YouTube itself would benefit commercially from enabling this market.

7. The Policy Case: Five Arguments for Immediate Action

This section advances five distinct arguments for why YouTube's exclusion of Somalia from the YPP is indefensible and must be corrected without further delay.

Argument 1: YouTube Extracts Value from Somali Creators Without Providing Compensation

YouTube does not prevent advertisements from appearing on Somali-language content. Advertisers pay to reach Somali-speaking audiences. YouTube collects its revenue share on every monetized view. The creators who produced the content that attracted those viewers receive nothing if they are registered in Somalia. This is not a neutral policy but a one-directional value-extraction policy. The platform takes the economic benefit of Somali creators' labor while declining to provide the economic mechanism through which those creators could receive their share. No defensible ethical framework for platform governance supports this arrangement.

Argument 2: The Infrastructure Justification Has Collapsed

If YouTube's historical rationale for excluding Somalia was the absence of reliable banking and payment infrastructure, that rationale no longer applies. As documented in Section 6.1, Somalia has a mobile money penetration rate of 73 percent, mobile financial transactions covering 82 percent of adults, and international payment operators fully capable of processing YPP payments. YouTube has successfully expanded the YPP to Uganda, and Tanzania using similar mobile-money-first approaches. The infrastructure precedent exists. Applying it to Somalia is an administrative decision, not a technical challenge.

Argument 3: Every Comparable African Nation Is Already Included

As documented in Section 5.4, the YPP is available in Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and numerous other African nations with creator communities of comparable or smaller scale than Somalia's. The country's mobile infrastructure is competitive with several included markets. There is no regional or continental framework within which Somalia's exclusion makes logical sense. It is an anomaly that requires correction.

Argument 4: The Policy Constitutes Active Harm to a Rebuilding State

Somalia is a post-conflict state undertaking a sustained reconstruction effort across political, economic, and social dimensions. Youth unemployment exceeds 30 percent. The creative economy represents one of the few sectors capable of absorbing educated young talent at scale without requiring heavy physical infrastructure investment. By excluding Somalia from the YPP, YouTube systematically redirects the economic returns from Somali creative labor to other countries, actively contributing to the brain drain that reconstruction efforts are attempting to reverse. This is not a neutral policy outcome. It is a measurable, ongoing contribution to development failure in one of the world's most fragile states.

Argument 5: YouTube's Mission Statement Requires Action

YouTube's publicly stated mission is to give everyone a voice and show them the world, with a particular emphasis on enabling diverse creators to build sustainable livelihoods on the platform. The Somali creators examined in this report have given millions of people a voice. They have built audiences across continents. They have produced journalism, cultural commentary, music, and entertainment that serve communities underrepresented across global media. YouTube has taken the benefit of their contribution to the platform's content library and advertising inventory, and declined to share the financial return. This is not consistent with the mission YouTube claims to pursue.

> Summary of Policy Case: YouTube's exclusion of Somalia from the YPP is ethically indefensible (it extracts value without providing compensation), technically unjustified (the infrastructure exists), regionally anomalous (all comparable African nations are included), developmentally harmful (it accelerates brain drain in a rebuilding state), and inconsistent with YouTube's own stated mission.

8. Recommendations

Based on the evidence and arguments presented in this report, the following four recommendations are submitted to YouTube and its parent company, Google LLC. These recommendations are specific, actionable, and informed by the precedents YouTube has established in comparable market expansions.

Recommendation 1: Add Somalia to the YouTube Partner Program

YouTube should formally initiate the process of qualifying Somalia for the YPP. This entails partnering with mobile money providers and banks in Somalia, as well as other licensed financial operators, to establish compliant payment pathways. YouTube should publish a formal timeline for this process, with quarterly progress updates, to ensure accountability. The precedent for mobile-money-first YPP expansion in East Africa provides a clear operational template.

Recommendation 2: Establish an Interim Somali Creator Payment Mechanism

While the formal YPP expansion process is underway, YouTube should establish an interim mechanism to distribute accrued earnings to qualifying Somali creators through existing international payment networks. Somali remittances operate in 144 countries, including all major Western markets, and are already used to process hundreds of millions of dollars in monthly remittances to Somalia. YouTube should engage remittance operators to pilot interim disbursements to creators.

Recommendation 3: Publish Transparent YPP Expansion Criteria

YouTube should publish clear, specific, and publicly accessible criteria defining what a country must meet to qualify for YPP inclusion. This transparency would enable governments, civil society organizations, and creator communities to understand the requirements and advocate effectively. The current opacity of the expansion process allows inaction to persist without accountability.

Recommendation 4: Invest in African CPM Development Through MENA Advertiser Engagement

YouTube should develop targeted initiatives to increase CPM rates for African-language content by actively engaging MENA and East African advertisers. The MENA digital advertising market is growing at 23.9 percent annually and represents a substantial untapped revenue pool for both creators and the platform. YouTube should work with Gulf-based brands, African telecoms, remittance companies, and FMCG advertisers to develop Somali-language and East African advertising products. Investment in advertiser development in this market will generate returns for all parties.

9. Conclusion

This report documents, through quantitative channel analysis, systematic comparative data, and economic evidence, that Somali content creators are being denied a fundamental right to platform participation that has been extended to their peers across Africa and the world. The evidence is unambiguous: the earnings gap between Somali channels and comparable African peer channels is not a product of content quality, subscriber engagement, or any metric of creator performance. It is a product of a policy decision by YouTube that excludes Somalia from the Partner Program.

That policy decision has consequences. It has produced a documented pattern of creative talent displacement, in which Somalia's most productive digital creators are compelled to register from abroad. It has extracted hundreds of thousands of dollars per month from Somali-produced content without returning any portion of that revenue to creators based in Somalia. It has denied Somalia's rapidly growing creator ecosystem the economic foundation it needs to develop sustainably. And it has done so in direct contradiction of YouTube's stated commitment to giving everyone a voice and enabling creators to build sustainable livelihoods on the platform.

The arguments against acting are weak. The infrastructure argument has collapsed: Somalia has 73 percent mobile money penetration and international payment operators with global networks. The market readiness argument has collapsed: 10.7 million internet users, a 55.2 percent penetration rate, and a demographically young, digitally active population constitute a viable market by any standard. The regional precedent argument has collapsed: Uganda, Tanzania, and some comparable East African market is already in the YPP.

Somalia's creators have spent years building audiences on the platform. YouTube runs advertisements on their content, collects its revenue share, and declines to pay them. This situation warrants immediate policy correction. More fundamentally, they deserve what every other creator in Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and the rest of Africa receives as a matter of course: the ability to earn directly from the platform they have invested their creative lives in building.

This report calls on YouTube to act on the four recommendations set out in Section 8, beginning with the formal initiation of the YPP expansion process for Somalia. The case has been established. The precedent exists. The infrastructure is present. The delay reflects a policy choice that YouTube has the capacity to address.

> Closing Statement: The question is not whether Somali creators deserve to be paid. They clearly do, and the evidence presented in this report establishes that beyond reasonable dispute. The question is how much longer YouTube will choose to maintain a policy that denies them that payment.

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