

5 August 2026

Why Registering Your Source Code Matters

Copyright Protection for Software in Tanzania

A quick guide to the law, the process, and the authorities that protect Tanzanian software creators

Every line of code you write in Tanzania becomes your intellectual property the moment you save it. Yet most developers never take the one step that makes that ownership easy to prove: registering with the **Copyright Society of Tanzania (COSOTA)**. Here's why it matters — and how it's done.

Why Source Code Deserves Copyright Attention



It's already protected — but hard to prove

Section 5 of the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, 1999 lists **computer programs** as protected literary works. Protection attaches automatically the moment code is fixed — no registration needed to create the right. But disputes are rarely about *whether* copyright exists — they're about *who owns it* and *when it was created*. A COSOTA certificate gives you a dated, official record that answers both questions instantly — valuable in licensing deals, investor due diligence, disputes, and court.

Legal Requirements for Registration



What COSOTA asks for

Governed by the 1999 Act and its 2005/2013 Registration Regulations. The work must be original — your own expression, not copied ideas (mere algorithms or concepts are not protectable). To register, submit:

- Completed COSOTA application form (title, nature, year of creation)
- Two fixed copies of the source code (e.g., on CD/DVD)
- Two passport photos of the applicant
- Valid ID (or, for a company, certificate of incorporation)
- Proof of ownership if you're not the original author (assignment/employment contract)
- Prescribed registration fee

COSOTA then issues a certificate — *prima facie* proof of ownership — and protection lasts for the author's life plus 50 years.

Governing Authorities



Who administers and enforces copyright

COSOTA — the mainland's copyright body (est. under s.46 of the Act): registers works, collects royalties, fights piracy. **COSOZA** — its counterpart for Zanzibar, under the Zanzibar Copyright Act, 2003. **The High Court (Commercial Division)** — resolves ownership and infringement disputes, with appeal to the Court of Appeal.

Bottom line: registering your source code turns an invisible right into a provable asset. It's a small step with outsized protection for Tanzanian developers and tech businesses.

General information only — not legal advice. Consult Tarishi & Co. Attorneys for legal advice

