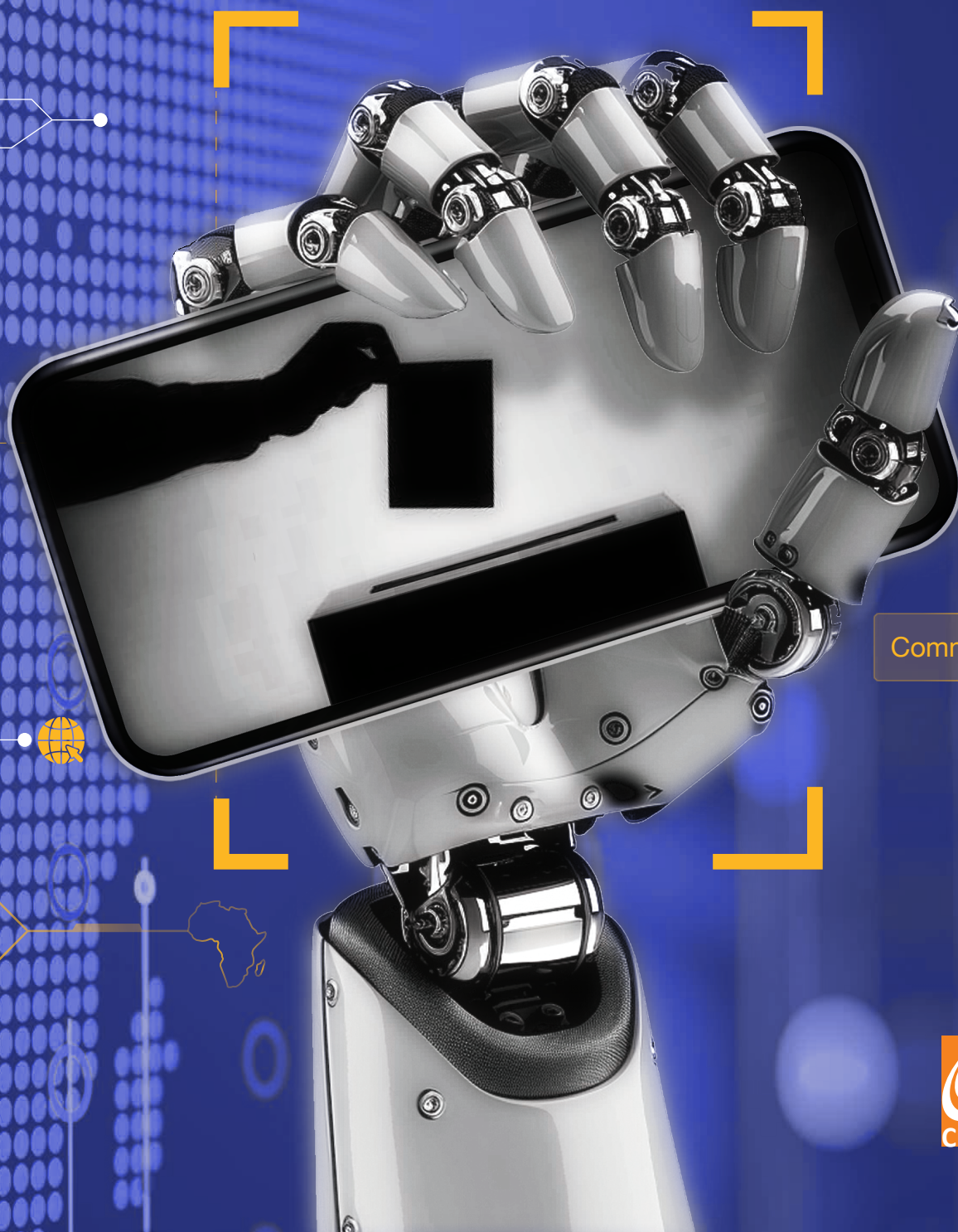State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2025

Navigating the Implications of AI on Digital Democracy in Africa

September, 2025

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State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2025
Navigating the Implications of AI on Digital Democracy in Africa

Published September 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming how people use technology the world over. While AI offers potential benefits across various sectors, its deployment by businesses and governments and application by individuals present new opportunities while raising significant concerns. More specifically, most African countries do not have legal or regulatory measures on the ethical and responsible use of AI. This study investigates how different African stakeholders use AI in digital democracy and its impact on civic space and digital rights. It examines the multifaceted interplay between AI and digital democracy across 14 African countries (Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe), with a primary purpose to fill critical knowledge gaps regarding the impact of AI on civic space and digital rights in Africa and to provide recommendations to exploit AI to advance digital democracy on the continent.

The study was guided by questions that sought to understand the value of AI, the associated challenges and risks, and the state of its regulation and deployment in Africa. The methodology employed by the study was qualitative under clear stipulated ethical research considerations. The research team conducted a systematic review of diverse literature from academia, civil society, government, international organisations, media, among others. This helped to generate an understanding of the current AI developments, benefits, regulatory gaps, challenges, and societal debates relevant to each country and the broader African continent. The reviewed pieces of work were supplemented by purposively selected key informant interviews (KIIs) with respondents chosen from various stakeholder groups (academia, civil society, government, media, private companies, the tech community and social media users) to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and deep contextual insights.

The findings show that the deployment of AI across diverse sectors, including governance, healthcare, agriculture, finance, media, and civic space, offers substantial positive value and some negative impacts.

The positive impacts extend to improved public services delivery, access to information and ensuring security in public spaces by governments. In the private sector, AI is being used to optimise and improve efficiency and introduce new products and services across sectors such as agriculture, education, health, urban development and finance. Among civil society, academia, and the media, AI is used in fact-checking and to monitor and track patterns of harmful content such as disinformation, hate speech, and gender-based violence and for conducting advocacy work. It is also essential for social accountability, access to relevant information and enhancing internal productivity and operational efficiencies.

Amongst the negative impacts of AI highlighted in this report are the potential use of AI-generated multimedia content on social media to generate disinformation with ease, manipulate perceptions and also make platforms feel less authentic. There are problems with content moderation, including platforms' insufficient measures to stem the spread of harmful content, poor working conditions of content moderators, and ethical issues around how moderation is done, which could worsen if legal frameworks do not adequately respond to the challenges. AI is also potentially associated with poor accountability, increased algorithmic bias and digital exclusion, with potential loss of employment and erosion of professionalism in the media sector.

The study further shows that the unchecked deployment of AI-powered surveillance, coupled with opaque content moderation practices, creates a chilling effect on free expression and assembly, directly shrinking the space for independent media, activism, and dissent. It points to the overwhelming potential of AI to adversely impact digital democracy and digital rights if left unchecked, and with poor legal and policy regulatory mechanisms.

The study concludes that while AI presents transformative opportunities for strengthening digital democracy, expanding civic space, and protecting digital rights in Africa, its current trajectory is marked by an imbalance. Without a deliberate, proactive, and rights-based approach to AI governance in Africa that is inclusive, transparent, and contextually relevant, AI risks becoming a powerful tool that deepens existing inequalities, facilitates authoritarian control, and fundamentally undermines democratic values and human rights across the continent. Governments are also at a crossroads, with the choice to harness AI as a force for positive change or to deploy it as a tool for digital authoritarianism.

Finally, the study highlights the need for a human-centred AI governance in Africa, through deliberate and inclusive approaches. It calls for the enactment of comprehensive AI legislation, requiring mandatory Human Rights Impact Assessments, establishing empowered AI governance institutions for an accountable sector, proactive advocacy of rights-based AI governance, building technical capacities of stakeholders and undertaking efforts to develop AI-centred policies.

Recommendations:

Government and Regulatory Bodies

- Enact comprehensive AI legislation aligned with national constitutions, international human rights standards (e.g., ICCPR), and regional frameworks (e.g., AU AI Strategy, UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI) through inclusive and multistakeholder processes. These should be contextualised for the continent and integrate clear provisions on algorithmic transparency, explainability, human oversight, liability, and the right to redress.
- Develop regional instruments, guidelines and standards on AI that promote responsible, human-centred and ethical AI governance, innovcation and human development across Africa.
- Establish or empower independent, well-resourced AI and data governance institutions, including at the regional level (e.g., AI commissions, ethics boards and Data Protection Authorities) with multidisciplinary experts and clear mandates for oversight, and capacity to audit AI systems, investigate rights violations, and handle complaints effectively.
- Invest in digital infrastructure and inclusion, including expanding internet access, reducing device and access costs, and improving digital infrastructure, especially in marginalised and underserved areas. AI strategies and tools should be developed to prioritise local languages, cultural relevance, and respond to local needs and realities.
- Ensure all AI deployment and use in the public sector is transparent and auditable, including publishing procurement disclosures, providing clear explanations of AI systems' purpose, usage, and implications, and making safeguards publicly accessible.

Private Sector and Tech Community

- Adopt and implement "rights-by-design", ethical AI principles and industry codes of conduct that explicitly include human rights principles from the outset of AI systems development.
- Enhance algorithmic transparency and accountability by publishing transparency reports (e.g., on government data requests, content removals), disclosing training data sources and model documentation to allow for scrutiny by civil society and independent experts, and subject high-impact AI systems to independent audits.
- Increase AI investments and prioritise the development of AI tools that are inclusive and contextually relevant for Africa, support local AI professionals, local AI startups and innovation hubs, and provide affordable and accessible AI services for underserved communities.
- Strengthen and integrate robust detection systems for deepfakes, hate speech, and coordinated disinformation campaigns, implement clear tagging or watermarking of AI-generated content, and ensure timely responses to reports of harmful content from the region.

Civil Society Organisations

- Advocate for rights-based AI governance reforms grounded in constitutional values, international human rights standards, and regional frameworks, to ensure robust legal protections for digital rights.
- Advocate for equitable access to AI services and technologies, ensuring that AI benefits are inclusive and reach all segments of society, particularly rural populations, women, persons with disabilities, and linguistic minorities.
- Demand transparency and accountability from state and non-state actors on AI deployments, algorithms, and decision-making processes, challenge discriminatory practices and abuses through public interest litigation and report abuse through channels on available platforms.
- Build technical and research capacity of key stakeholders to monitor and document the impact of AI on human rights (social, economic, and political), including establishing accessible reporting channels for AI abuse and collecting evidence-based case studies of AI abuses and their effects, particularly on vulnerable, rural, and marginalised groups.
- Conduct comprehensive digital and AI literacy campaigns by providing accessible information, communication, and education materials to enhance public awareness and understanding of AI risks, opportunities, and digital rights.

Media and Journalists

- Develop AI policies for newsrooms, setting clear ethical guidelines for the responsible use of generative AI tools in reporting, editing, and content production, ensuring editorial independence and accuracy.
- Invest in AI-powered fact-checking systems and verification tools to strengthen investigative journalism, combat AI-driven disinformation and assist in detecting AI-generated content, e.g., deepfakes, synthetic voices, and manipulated multimedia content.
- Invest in training journalists in AI literacy to enable them to investigate AI issues in their respective countries, use AI safely and ethically in their work, and report accurately on its risks, benefits and opportunities.

Academia and Research Institutions

- Conduct independent, multidisciplinary and evidence-based research on AI's societal impacts in African contexts, including its influence on political participation, media consumption, public service delivery, algorithmic biases, and civic space to fill critical knowledge gaps.
- Develop interdisciplinary AI Curricula that, for example, integrate ethics and digital democracy modules into AI and computer science courses, or AI into journalism, political science, and law, to foster a new generation of ethically conscious professionals and policymakers.
- Develop open-access datasets and benchmarks that reflect African languages, cultural contexts, and democratic priorities to mitigate algorithmic bias, promote local innovation and relevance, and counter bias from foreign datasets.
- Develop and provide relevant AI training programmes for actors across diverse sectors (e.g. civil society, government, media, private sector and technical community) to build capacity and address gaps in AI awareness.

The Public

- Participate in AI governance processes to shape policies that affect their digital lives.
- Use secure communication tools to protect privacy and freedom of expression in an increasingly surveilled digital landscape.
- Report abuse through the available channels on the relevant digital platforms.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Artificial Intelligence has gained considerable attention given its potential to significantly impact Artificial Intelligence has gained considerable attention given its potential to significantly impact Africa's digital, socio-economic, and governance landscape.[1] While AI deployment in Africa is still limited, there is strong momentum given the growing developments in sectors such as education, agriculture, finance, health, disability aid, urban development, government services and commerce for applications such as e-learning, data analytics, chatbots, decision support and diagnostics.[2] More recently, the advancement and availability of Generative AI has been a game-changer, given its potential transformative impact on society.[3] In particular, Generative AI's radical novelty, relatively fast growth, potential and uncertain impact across multiple sectors present new opportunities, including in content creation.[4]

AI technologies present a positive promise for civic space and digital rights in Africa and can drive social and economic advancement, democracy, innovation and cultural exchange. Already, AI tools are expanding access to information and public services by supporting natural language processing, search, and data analysis in local African languages.[5] AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants are also being used to boost engagement and generate content such as text and images, thus enhancing the creation abilities of users.[6] Indeed, popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X, YouTube, SnapChat and TikTok have integrated various AI tools to aid search, translation, and chat while providing powerful tools for content creation, editing, recommendation and moderation. For example, on X, Grok is being relied on for quick information, real-time answers, and to stir debate.[7] Snapchat and TikTok's AI tools enable various filters, auto-captions, and music syncing for creators.[8] Similarly, YouTube AI enables video summaries, automatic captions, post-generation and translation of content.[9]

1   The Political Economy of African AI: A Primer on Concepts, Contexts, Considerations and Capitalism, https://researchictafrica.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/The-Political-Economy-of-African-AI_Research-Paper_AJAI_2405.pdf; Beneficial artificial intelligence (AI) and sustainable development through circularity, https://researchictafrica.net/research/beneficial-artificial-intelligence-ai-and-sustainable-development-through-circularity/

2   How is A.I. being utilised in Africa https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYjc5NTQyMzQtNTFiZS00ZTdjLTkwMmMtZWZkOGU3Njk1ZjM2IiwidCI6IjdhNTNiMjZhLTI1YTUtNGNiYS05NGM4LTM4ZWFlMWY3MzVjYSJ9&pageName=ReportSection

3   Why global leaders see generative AI as a game-changer https://www.accenture.com/nz-en/blogs/cloud/why-global-leaders-think-generative-ai-game-changer

4   Opportunities and Challenges of Applying Generative AI to Businesses https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbestechcouncil/2024/11/20/opportunities-and-challenges-of-applying-generative-ai-to-businesses/; Recognizing that Gen AI will be the innovation game-changer https://shorturl.at/Ppoch

5   Can AI help Africa close the development gap? https://www.ft.com/content/bdab80fe-e800-4c1c-926d-a6faa750cd57

6   Conversational AI: Everything You Need To Know https://www.bloomreach.com/en/blog/conversational-ai-everything-you-need-to-know

7   Grok https://x.com/grok?lang=en

8   Introducing AI Alive: Bringing Your Photos to Life on TikTok Stories https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/introducing-tiktok-ai-alive; What is My AI on Snapchat and how do I use it? https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-us/articles/13266788358932-What-is-My-AI-on-Snapchat-and-how-do-I-use-it

9   YouTube's AI power-up: How we got even more helpful this year, https://blog.youtube/inside-youtube/2024-in-youtube-ai/

In addition, activists and other users have adopted the use of #hashtags and social media trends to track and engage on critical topics. Also, AI is being used to monitor hate speech and disinformation, particularly around elections, examples being the Umati Project that applied natural language processing to identify dangerous speech on social media in Kenya,[10] with similar endeavours by Ghana's Fact-Checking Coalition, HaqCheck in Ethiopia, and iVerify in Nigeria. AI is also supporting inclusive and improved public services delivery, with countries such as Zimbabwe and Rwanda deploying the technology to improve the functioning of judicial systems.[11]

African governments are also adopting AI technologies for various purposes, including surveillance, law enforcement, and public services delivery.[12] Face biometrics integrated with digital ID and closed-circuit television (CCTV) powered by AI technologies are gaining popularity and are used to offer real-time facial recognition for immigration self-check-in at airports, event management, and security in public spaces.[13] Ghana introduced a biometric-based border management system with e-gates with facial recognition to verify travellers' identities.[14] Kenya plans to upgrade its airports with AI-based security and biometric gates,[15] South Africa plans to introduce a new digital ID system,[16] and Rwanda aims to develop 50 AI applications across sectors like healthcare, education, agriculture, finance, and public administration within four years.[17]

According to the Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index 2024, Egypt, Mauritius, South Africa, and Rwanda are the front-runners in Africa. [18] Other countries that have made notable progress include Senegal, Seychelles, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Zambia, Cabo Verde and Ethiopia. The lagging countries are Chad, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan.

The use of AI has some potential negative impacts. The increased use of AI-generated content on social media, such as posts, videos and photos, could be used to generate disinformation with ease, manipulate perceptions and also make platforms feel less authentic.[19] Likewise, problems with content moderation, including platforms' insufficient measures to stem the spread of harmful content, poor working conditions of content moderators, and ethical issues around how moderation is done, could worsen if existing legal frameworks are not responsive to the challenges.[20] Recently, X's AI chatbot - Grok - was embroiled in controversy around spreading false information about the 2024 US election and generating violent, graphic fake images of famous politicians.[21]
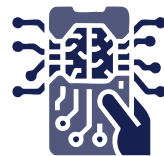
Rwanda
aims to develop
50
AI applications

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10   AI can make African elections more efficient – but trust must be built and proper rules put in place, https://theconversation.com/ai-can-make-african-elections-more-efficient-but-trust-must-be-built-and-proper-rules-put-in-place-229841

11   Daniel Sabiiti, Rwanda prepares to adopt AI for better justice delivery, ktpress.rw/2024/12/rwanda-prepares-to-adopt-ai-for-better-justice-delivery/

12   How AI is impacting policy processes and outcomes in Africa https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-ai-is-impacting-policy-processes-and-outcomes-in-africa/

13   Face biometrics popularity comes with opportunity and risk https://www.biometricupdate.com/202503/face-biometrics-popularity-comes-with-opportunity-and-risk; NEC supplying biometric walkthrough gates for Japanese airports https://www.biometricupdate.com/202503/nec-supplying-biometric-walkthrough-gates-for-japanese-airports

14   Ghana unveils biometric border management system, e-gates at main airport https://shorturl.at/5jOXb

15   Kenya plans airports overhaul with biometrics for faster, secure operations https://www.biometricupdate.com/202502/kenya-plans-airports-overhaul-with-biometrics-for-faster-secure-operations

16   South Africa will invest in DPI, says President https://www.biometricupdate.com/202502/south-africa-will-invest-in-dpi-says-president; South Africa envisages fully-functional digital ID system before 2029 national elections https://www.biometricupdate.com/202503/south-africa-envisages-fully-functional-digital-id-system-before-2029-national-elections

17   Rwanda to Develop 50 AI Tools Across Various Sectors - Official https://allafrica.com/stories/202503060519.html

18   Government AI Readiness Index 2024 https://oxfordinsights.com/ai-readiness/ai-readiness-index/

19   State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2024 https://cipesa.org/wp-content/files/reports/State_of_Internet_Freedom_in_Africa_Report_2024.pdf; Convergence of artificial intelligence with social media: A bibliometric & qualitative analysis https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S277250302400032X

20   'It's destroyed me completely': Kenyan moderators decry toll of training of AI models https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/aug/02/ai-chatbot-training-human-toll-content-moderator-meta-openai; Why Africa Is Sounding the Alarm on Platforms' Shift in Content Moderation https://www.techpolicy.press/why-africa-is-sounding-the-alarm-on-platforms-shift-in-content-moderation/

21   Ibid

The floodgate of AI-generated content could also risk drowning out human voices, making it harder for unamplified perspectives to be heard. AI is already shaping what users view, and algorithmic boosts, recommender systems and automated moderation tools could lead to bot-dominated timelines, making platform timelines feel less free and more curated. Furthermore, AI can also be used to commit cyber crimes,[22] manipulate content, and aid smear and disinformation campaigns during elections, for example in Namibia[23] and Kenya, or to advance pro-government propaganda, for instance in Burkina Faso and Rwanda. Also, with AI-systems data collection and labelling industry expected to grow to over USD 14 billion by 2030, there are widespread concerns over the exploitation of Africa's AI data workers and content moderators.[24]

Notably, privacy concerns around data used for training AI models remain unresolved. In November 2024, X changed its terms of service, requiring users to agree that it could use their data to train its AI models.[25] Moreover, AI-powered facial recognition and predictive policing tools such as Zimbabwe's AI-based digital ID system and Smart City technologies can be used for mass surveillance, thus raising concerns for privacy, civic space restriction and potential misuse.[26] Further, given the limited data from Africa used to train the AI systems in use, such systems could perpetuate bias and amplify existing societal inequalities, leading to discriminatory outcomes around age, gender, race and ethnicity.[27] Other notable challenges for AI deployment in Africa include limited digital infrastructure, low digital skills and literacy rates, limited funding for research and development (R&D), and inadequate legal and institutional frameworks.[28]

Currently, African countries are at various stages of developing their policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to promote fair, safe, secure, trustworthy, inclusive and responsible AI. Algeria, Benin, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, Rwanda and Zambia have developed AI strategies.[29] Morocco, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe are in the process of developing their national AI strategies and policies.

In July 2024, the African Union adopted a Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy, which prioritises the development and adaptation of AI systems to Africa's context, and is guided by the principles of ethics, inclusion and diversity, human rights and human dignity, people's well-being, peace and prosperity.[30] The AU strategy can offer a guiding framework for the majority of African countries that have yet to develop an AI policy or strategy. Notably, the continental strategy calls for an ethical and human rights-based approach to AI policy-making, which could help to address concerns about the risks of AI.

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22 *AI risk and cybersecurity https://researchictafrica.net/research/ai-risk-and-cybersecurity/*

23 *AI amplified election disinformation in Namibia, report finds https://www.msn.com/en-za/news/other/ai-amplified-election-disinformation-in-namibia-report-finds/ar-AA1BLwMg*

24 *Africa's data workers are being exploited by foreign tech firms – 4 ways to protect them https://shorturl.at/egSi3; Africa's data workers are being exploited by foreign tech firms – 4 ways to protect them https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/aug/02/ai-chatbot-training-human-toll-content-moderator-meta-openai*

25 *X changed its terms of service to let its AI train on everyone's posts. Now users are up in arms https://edition.cnn.com/2024/10/21/tech/x-twitter-terms-of-service/index.html*

26 *Digital ID in Zimbabwe: A case study https://digitalid.theengineroom.org/assets/pdfs/[English]%20Zimbabwe%20Case%20Study%20-%20DigitalID%20-%20The%20Engine%20Room.pdf; CloudWalk facial recognition deployed in Zimbabwe https://www.securityvision.io/wiki/index.php/CloudWalk_facial_recognition_deployed_in_Zimbabwe; Zimbabwe govt faces criticism over biometric surveillance project for new smart city https://www.biometricupdate.com/202302/zimbabwe-govt-faces-criticism-over-biometric-surveillance-project-for-new-smart-city*

27 *Lack of data makes AI more biased in African countries, says former tech official https://therecord.media/lack-of-data-makes-ai-more-biased-in-africa; AI bias in sexual and reproductive health in Africa https://altadvisory.africa/2025/01/31/ai-bias-in-sexual-and-reproductive-health-in-africa/*

28 *Beneficial artificial intelligence (AI) and sustainable development through circularity https://researchictafrica.net/research/beneficial-artificial-intelligence-ai-and-sustainable-development-through-circularity/*

29 *National AI strategies and policies in Africa map https://researchictafrica.net/research/national-ai-strategies-and-policies-in-africa-map/*

30 *Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44004-doc-EN-_Continental_AI_Strategy_July_2024.pdf*

In March 2025, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) adopted Resolution 630/2025, expressing concern over regressions in content moderation and calling for the development of guidelines to enable States Parties to effectively monitor the platforms' performance and advance information integrity online.[31] There are also efforts to enhance data governance across the region with the implementation of the AU Data Policy Framework.[32] Meanwhile, Kenya is one of the first African countries to join the recently established International Network of AI Safety Institutes, which aims to advance AI safety, help governments and society understand the risks posed by advanced AI systems, and suggest solutions to address those risks to minimise harm.[33]

In sum, AI presents Africa with new opportunities and significant challenges to civic space and digital rights. This study aims to fill critical knowledge gaps by examining the impact of AI on civic space and digital rights in Africa and to provide recommendations to exploit the power of AI to advance digital democracy in Africa.

1.2   Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:
1.   What is the value of AI to Africa's civic space and digital rights?
2.   What are the main challenges and risks that AI design, deployment, use and governance pose to civic space and digital rights in Africa?
3.   What is the state of AI regulation in Africa?
4.   What steps are needed to ensure effective, participatory, and human rights-centred AI governance frameworks in Africa?

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31   *Resolution on developing Guidelines to assist States monitor technology companies in respect of their duty to maintain information integrity through independent fact checking - ACHPR/Res.630 (LXXXII) 2025* https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/achprres630-lxxxii-2025

32   *The Global Landscape of Data Governance* https://www.cigionline.org/articles/the-global-landscape-of-data-governance/

33   *Kenya Joins Inaugural International AI Safety Network in San Francisco* https://www.odrimedia.co.ke/technology/kenya-joins-inaugural-international-ai-safety-network-in-san-francisco/; *First meeting of the International Network of AI Safety Institutes* https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/first-meeting-international-network-ai-safety-institutes

2.0 Methodology

The research methodology for the 2025 State of Internet Freedom in Africa (SIFA) Report entailed a qualitative approach across the 14 study countries to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current status of AI and its impact on civic space and digital rights in Africa. The countries are Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The research team conducted a systematic review of diverse literature - research reports, resolutions, policy statements, media reports - from academia, civil society, government, international organisations, media, among others. This helped to generate an understanding of the current AI developments, benefits, regulatory gaps, challenges, and societal debates relevant to each country and the broader African continent.

Policy and legal analysis focused on a comparative review of the existing and emerging national laws, policies and strategies relevant to AI, digital rights, and governance, their application to AI systems and their alignment to international and human rights standards. Lastly, primary data collection was conducted through purposefully selected key informant interviews (KIIs). Respondents were chosen from various stakeholder groups (academia, civil society, government, media, private companies, the tech community and social media users) to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and deep contextual insights. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, maintaining gender balance, and accommodating language preferences. Additionally, case studies and triangulation of data have been integrated to augment the findings and ensure accuracy and evidence-based presentation of the results.

3. Country Context

3.1   ICT Status

The study countries are at diverse levels of ICT development. As shown in Table 1 below, the leaders, South Africa, Tunisia, and Egypt, received the highest scores of 85, 79.6 and 77.9, respectively, on the ICT Development Index. The index measures the extent to which connectivity is universal and meaningful in a country over time, with the best possible score being 100.

These high rates of ICT development were also reflected in the mobile, internet and social media penetration rates of these countries. According to estimates from DataRePortal, the highest mobile penetration rates were reported in South Africa (193%), Tunisia (128%), Kenya (121%) and Senegal (121%). The highest internet penetration rates were reported in Tunisia (84.9%), Egypt (81.9%), and South Africa (81.9%). With respect to social media, the leaders were Tunisia (58.9%), Egypt (43.1%) and South Africa (41.5%).[34] Notably, reliable statistics on penetration rates are not readily available, and computation methodologies vary across countries, thus figures are approximate.

Countries with the lowest ICT Development ratings were Mozambique (32.4), Uganda (42.4), and Cameroon (46.3). The lowest mobile penetration rates were reported in Mozambique (50.4%), Ethiopia (63.8%) and Nigeria (64%). Internet penetration was lowest in Mozambique (19.7%), Ethiopia (21.3%), and Uganda (28%). Additionally, according to DataRePortal, social media penetration was lowest in Ethiopia (6.2%) and Rwanda (9%).

[34]   *Not including WhatAspp*

Table 1: *Digital Landscape Key Metrics*

Country	Mobile Penetration (%)[35]	Internet Penetration (%)	Social Media Penetration (%)	ICT Development Index[36]	AI Preparedness Index[37]	Government AI Readiness Index[39]	Global Innovation Index	GSMA Mobile Connectivity Index
Cameroon	86.3%	41.9%	18.5%	46.3	0.34	33.46	14.4	49.0
Egypt	99%	81.9%	43.1%	77.9	0.39	55.63	23.7	65.8
Ethiopia	63.8%	21.3%	6.2%	44.0	0.25	38.34	12.3	41.6
Ghana	110%	69.9%	22.9%	70.6	0.43	43.30	20.0	56.9
Kenya	121%	48%	26.5%	56.0	0.45	43.56	21.0	56.8
Mozambique	50.4%	19.7%	10.5%	32.4	0.26	24.22	13.1	39.9
Namibia	87.1%	64.4%	24.6%	73.2	0.42	33.28	20.0	56.3
Nigeria	64%	45.4%	16.4%	52.9	0.34	43.33	17.1	53.3
Rwanda	92%	34.2%	9%	51.9	0.44	51.25	19.7	52.2
Senegal	121%	60.6	26.8	71.6	0.40	46.11	22.0	51.4
South Africa	193%	78.9%	41.5%	85.0	0.5	52.91	28.3	71.7
Tunisia	128%	84.9%	58.9%	79.6	0.47	43.68	25.4	66.6
Uganda	76.2%	28%	4.7%	42.4	0.35	34.63	14.9	45.5
Zimbabwe	90.6%	38.4%	12.5%	56.8	0.30	32.59	15.6	38.8

Stronger ICT systems provide a stronger base for AI ecosystems. In terms of the AI Preparedness Index,[40] the highest scores were in South Africa (0.5), Tunisia (0.47), Kenya (0.45), and Rwanda (0.44). The lowest were recorded in Ethiopia (0.25), Mozambique (0.26), and Zimbabwe (0.30).

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35 *Digital 2025: Cameroon https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-cameroon; Digital 2025: Egypt https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-egypt; Digital 2025: Ethiopia https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-ethiopia; Digital 2025: Ghana https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-ghana; Digital 2025: Kenya https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-kenya; Digital 2025: Mozambique https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-mozambique; Digital 2025: Namibia https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-namibia; Digital 2025: Nigeria https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-nigeria; Digital 2025: Rwanda https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-rwanda; Digital 2025: Senegal https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-senegal; https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-south-africa; Digital 2025: Tunisia https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-tunisia; Digital 2025: Uganda https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-uganda; Digital 2025: Zimbabwe https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-zimbabwe*

36 *The ICT Development Index 2025, ITU https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/ind/D-IND-ICT_MDD-2025-1-PDF-E.pdf*

37 *AI Preparedness Index, International Monetary Fund, https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/AI_PI@AIPI/ADVEC/EME/LIC/SSQ/ZAF/TUN/NAM/EGY*

38 *Government AI Readiness Index 2024, Oxford Insights https://oxfordinsights.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2024-Government-AI-Readiness-Index.pdf*

39 *Global Innovation Index 2024 Unlocking the Promise of Social Entrepreneurship, 2024, WIPO https://www.wipo.int/web-publications/global-innovation-index-2024/assets/67729/2000%20Global%20Innovation%20Index%202024_WEB3lite.pdf*

40 *The AI Preparedness Index (AIPI) assesses a country's level of AI preparedness based on a set of macro-structural indicators that cover the country's digital infrastructure, human capital and labour market policies, innovation and economic integration, and regulation and ethics.*

In the Government AI Readiness Index,[41] Egypt led with 55.63 on a score of 100, followed by South Africa (52.91) and Rwanda (51.25). These countries stand out as front-runners, with clear momentum in strengthening their AI ecosystems. The weakest performers were Mozambique (24.22), Zimbabwe (32.59), and Namibia (33.28), which showed lower government prioritisation of AI. The development of AI Strategies, the adoption of AI principles and the strengthening of data governance across the study countries were noted as key factors in increasing recognition of AI as a driver of national development.

Among the study countries, South Africa led Global Innovation Index[42] ratings with a score of 28.3 (the highest possible score being 100), followed by Tunisia (25.4), Egypt (23.7), and Senegal (22.0). Ethiopia (12.3), Mozambique (13.1), and Uganda (14.9) were the laggards. Meanwhile, on the GSMA Mobile Connectivity Index, South Africa (71.7), Tunisia (66.6), and Egypt (65.8) led among the study countries. The countries with the weakest performance were Mozambique (39.9) and Zimbabwe (38.8). According to the GSMA, across the globe, Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest connectivity levels and the largest coverage gap (13%) and usage gap (55%). The main challenges include the unaffordability of internet-enabled handsets, a rural-urban access gap of 54% and a mobile internet gender gap (32%).

Notably, South Africa has a strong AI ecosystem, hosting four AI-capable data centres and is among the top 13 AI compute regions globally, and there are at least 100 companies either using or creating AI-based solutions, significant university-led AI research and capacity building, and diverse AI use cases already being deployed.[43] The government has prioritised research, and its funding constitutes 56.3% of AI research and development spending in the country.[44] The country attracted USD 610 million in AI-focused venture capital in 2023, which is expected to reach USD 3.7 billion by 2030.[45]

Countries like Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe have nascent AI sectors, which are constrained by limited funding, infrastructure and skills, and risk falling behind in AI adoption. The results also mean the potential benefits and opportunities that AI could present will likely mirror the well-established patterns of ICT development and the impact of the pervasive digital divide. Hence, typical vulnerable groups (rural populations, women, linguistic minorities, the digitally unskilled) could be marginalised further and risk new forms of digital discrimination and potential harms of AI. Nonetheless, efforts by the countries to improve their ICT ecosystems reflect the region's potential to build on emerging strengths and advance AI readiness across the region.

185%
AI-related publications

Four
AI-capable data centres

USD 610
Million in AI-focused venture capital in 2023

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41 The explores 40 indicators across three pillars: Government, Technology Sector, and Data & Infrastructure.

42 It provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of global innovation across four key stages of the innovation cycle: science and innovation investment, technological progress, technology adoption, and the socioeconomic impact of innovation.

43 Shabangu, Pay. "Artificial Intelligence's (AI's) Implications for Strategic Communication." Communicare Journal for Communication Studies in Africa 43, no. 1 (July 2024): 36–47. https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S2957-79502024000100004&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en

44 UNESCO. "South Africa's RAM Data and Country Report." UNESCO: Global AI Ethics and Governance Observatory, March 2025. https://www.unesco.org/ethics-ai/en/southafrica

45 Harnessing the Transformative Power of AI in Africa, MasterCard, https://www.mastercard.com/news/media/ue4fmcc5/mastercard-ai-in-africa-2025.pdf

3.2 Economic and Development Status

The economic and developmental status varies across the study countries. The leaders with significantly higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, such as South Africa and Namibia, appear to have the strongest economic foundations for AI development.

Incomes are generally low across Africa, where the average nominal GDP per person is USD 1,930 compared to USD 14,210 globally. Table 2 below shows economic disparities among the study countries, with the leaders such as South Africa, Namibia and Tunisia enjoying GDP per capita of USD 6,400, 4,660 and 4,530, respectively. The laggards, namely Mozambique, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda, struggle with GDP below the African average.

Looking at living standards adjusted for prices in 2025, Egypt stands out with the highest PPP income (USD 21,670), ahead of South Africa (USD 15,990) and Tunisia (USD 14,780). In terms of growth, Africa's average real GDP growth of 3.9% in 2025 was ahead of the global pace of 2.8%. Among the study countries Senegal led (8.4%), followed by Rwanda (7.1%), Ethiopia (6.6%), Uganda (6.1%) and Zimbabwe (6.0%). At the other end, the large economies of South Africa and Tunisia expand only 1.0% and 1.4% respectively, with Mozambique at 2.5%. Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Namibia and Nigeria showed modest growth of 2-4% annually.

Table 2: *Economic and Development Indicators in 2025*

Country	Population (million)	Real GDP Growth (%)[46]	GDP per capita, current prices[47] (USD)	GDP per capita, current prices (PPP) (USD)[48]	Human Development Index (HDI)[49] Rank 2025
Cameroon	28	3.6	1,870	5,760	155
Egypt	117.4	3.8	3,170	21,670	100
Ethiopia	134	6.6	1,070	4,400	180
Ghana	34.7	4	2,520	8,420	143
Kenya	57	4.8	2,470	7,530	143
Mozambique	35.1	2.5	663.34	1,730	182
Namibia	3.06	3.8	4,660	12,370	136
Nigeria	235	3	806.84	6,790	164
Rwanda	14.4	7.1	1,040	4,100	159
Senegal	18.7	8.4	1,810	5,500	169
South Africa	64.4	1	6,400	15,990	106
Tunisia	12.3	1.4	4.53	14,780	105
Uganda	50.7	6.1	1,340	3,900	157
Zimbabwe	16.8	6	2,200	5,410	153
Africa		3.9	1,930	7,370	
World		2.8	14,210		

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46 *Real GDP growth, https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/SSQ/EGY*

47 *Gross domestic product is the most commonly used single measure of a country's overall economic activity. It represents the total value at current prices of final goods and services produced within a country during a specified time period divided by the average population for the same one year. See: https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/SSQ/EGY*

48 *GDP per capita, current prices, https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PPPPC@WEO/SSQ/EGY*

49 *Human Development Index 2025, UNDP, https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2025reporten.pdf*

None of the countries under review featured in the top 100 in the Human Development Index (HDI) rankings, with the leaders being Egypt (100), Tunisia (105) and South Africa (106), still way lower than other countries globally. The lowest ranking countries are Mozambique (182), Ethiopia (180) and Senegal (169). Notably, Africa's average ranking on the HDI remains well below the world average. It is projected that AI could contribute USD 2.9 trillion to Africa's economy, and lead to a 3% increase in GDP, thereby lifting 11 million Africans out of poverty and creating 500,000 jobs each year by 2030.[50] Also, Africa's AI market is projected to grow from USD 4.51 billion in 2025 to USD 16.5 billion by 2030, according to a recent report from Statista.[51] Also, AI has the potential to contribute substantially to the achievement of Africa's 2063 vision and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[52]

Given the economic disparities across countries, it is likely that states experiencing higher growth and GDP could be leaders in AI adoption. However, those with lower incomes and uneven HDI could face challenges, despite their appetite and the momentum towards AI adoption. A recent study revealed that about two-thirds of respondents in low, medium and high HDI countries expect to use AI in education, health and work within one year.[53] The study notes that AI will have consequences on human development, and impact agency and freedoms, now and in posterity. Further, a key risk was that AI tools such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini and Microsoft's Copilot tended to more strongly reflect cultures in very high HDI countries, which are better represented in AI datasets and have less resemblance to cultures in low HDI countries, thus risking new inequalities.

3.3 Political and Governance Environment

The study also examined the political environment in the various study countries, as shown in Table 3 below. South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Senegal and Tunisia emerged as the top performers that consistently scored well across the various indices reviewed. For instance, according to the Freedom in the World Report 2025, the highest scores were reported in South Africa (81 out of 100), Ghana (80), Namibia (73), and Senegal (69), which is indicative of strong democratic environments. A similar situation was reported in Internet Freedom scores, where South Africa led with 74 out of 100 and was rated as Free.It was followed by Ghana (6/100), Kenya (64/100), Nigeria (59/100), Tunisia (60/100), Uganda (53/100), and Zimbabwe (48/100), all of which were rated as Partly Free. Also, South Africa (7.16/10), Namibia (6.48/10), and Ghana (6.24/10) were the top performers in the Democracy Index. In the Ibrahim Index of African Governance,[53] the countries that ranked in the top positions were led by South Africa, which took the fourth position on the continent, followed by Namibia (6), Ghana (7), Tunisia (9), Kenya (10), and Senegal (11).

AI
could
contribute

USD 2.9
Trillion to Africa's economy

3%
Increase of GDP

50 Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Smart Cities in Africa https://www.africa-usforum.africa/artificial-intelligence-and-the-future-of-smart-cities-in-africa/#:~:text=One%20could%20conclude%20that%20AI%20holds%20transformative,the%20quality%20of%20life%20for%20their%20residents.

51 AI in Africa to Top $16.5B by 2030: Mastercard Explores Path for Continued Digital Transformation https://finance.yahoo.com/news/ai-africa-top-16-5b-184400904.html; Artificial Intelligence - Africa https://www.statista.com/outlook/tmo/artificial-intelligence/africa

52 The role of artificial intelligence in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1905/1905.00501.pdf

53 Human Development Report 2025, A matter of choice: People and possibilities in the age of A UNDP https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2025reporten.pdf

55 The IIAG uses a framework based on four main categories: Security & Rule of Law, Participation, Rights & Inclusion, Foundations for Economic Opportunity, and Human Development. The data is aggregating data from independent sources and indicators to measure the quality of governance upon which countries are scored and ranked.

Figure 1: *Political and Governance Indicators*

44 Tunisia
60 | 129 | 4.71 | 9

Nigeria **44**
59 | 122 | 4.16 | 33

18 Egypt
28 | 170 | 2.79 | 24

Ghana **80**
65 | 52 | 6.24 | 7

18 Ethiopia
27 | 145 | 3.24 | 29

Senegal **69**
74 | 5.93 | 11

51 Kenya
64 | 117 | 5.05 | 10

Cameroon **15**
131 | 2.56 | 39

34 Uganda
53 | 143 | 4.49 | 26

Rwanda **21**
36 | 146 | 3.34 | 14

26 Zimbabwe
48 | 106 | 2.98 | 31

Namibia **73**
28 | 6.48 | 6

41 Mozambique
101 | 3.38 | 28

81 South Africa
74 | 27 | 7.16 | 4

Freedom in the World [55]
- 🔴 Not Free
- 🟡 Partly Free
- 🟢 free

Freedom on The Net [56]

Press Freedom Rank 2025 [57]

Democracy Index 2024 [58]

Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) 2024 (Rank) [59]

55 *Freedom in the World 2025, Freedom House https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiw&year=2025*

56 *Freedom of the Net 2024, Freedom House https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fotn&year=2024*

57 *World Press Freedom Index 2025, Reporters Without Borders, https://rsf.org/en/index*

58 *Democracy Index 2024, Our World in Data https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/democracy-index-eiu?tab=table&tableFilter=countries*

59 *Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) 2024 https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024-index-report.pdf*

In terms of the weakest performers on the Freedom in the World Report, Cameroon, which scored 15 points, followed by Egypt (18), Ethiopia (18), and Rwanda (21), were rated as Not Free. Regarding internet freedom, a similar pattern was noted, with Egypt scoring 28 points out of 100, followed by Ethiopia (27) and Rwanda (36), with all these countries rated as Not Free. On press freedom, the laggards, as per the World Press Freedom Index 2025, included Rwanda, which was ranked at 146th out of 180 countries globally, followed by Egypt (170), Cameroon (131), Ethiopia (145), Nigeria (122), and Zimbabwe (106). The weakest democracies, as per the Democracy Index, were Ethiopia (3.24 out of 10), Mozambique (3.38), Rwanda (3.34), Egypt (2.79), Cameroon (2.56), and Zimbabwe (2.98), which scored lower than the African average of 3.92. In terms of governance, On the Ibrahim Index, Zimbabwe (31), Nigeria (33), and Cameroon (39) ranked the lowest among the African countries.

Overall, the varied performance across the political and governance indices among the study countries has profound implications for AI development in Africa. Strong democracies such as South Africa, Ghana, Namibia, and Senegal have demonstrated robust civic freedoms and governance, which are essential ingredients for effective AI innovation, development and governance. Countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Tunisia and Rwanda offer mixed prospects, as their growing technology and AI sectors may be inhibited by deteriorating democracy credentials and human rights records. The situation is more aggravated in the countries with the lowest rankings, such as Cameroon, Ethiopia, Egypt, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, which have fragile democratic systems, low internet freedom, poor press freedom and heightened political repression. Such restricted environments could constrain AI's potential or result in the use of AI to amplify digital authoritarianism rather than advancing digital democracy and broad-based development.

4. Study Findings

Digital Democracy is increasingly being shaped by AI in Africa. Indeed, the manner in which AI is being adopted across study countries has wide implications for civic space, digital rights and democratic participation, including in elections. Since Africa is on the road to digital transformation, the adoption of AI is exciting given its potential to enhance public service delivery, enable citizen engagement, enhance participation in democratic processes and enable more open, accountable and transparent governance systems. Coupled with the ongoing data governance initiatives on the continent, AI has the capacity to transform socio-economic and political sectors and processes. This section presents ways through which AI is fast integrating and shaping democratic governance and participation vis-à-vis the enjoyment of digital rights in Africa.

4.1 Value of AI to Africa's Civic Space and Digital Rights

Across the 14 study countries, the adoption of AI is making a promising wave in expanding civic space and digital rights due to ongoing improvements in translation, information access, and civic participation (for instance chatbots in public services and content generation in local languages). Governments are piloting AI for service delivery and identity systems, while the media and civil society are experimenting with transcription, fact-checking, and data analysis. Yet diffusion is uneven and often concentrated in capitals and among better-resourced actors.

4.1.1 Governments and Public Sector

Some governments are increasingly leveraging AI to enhance public services and to improve the efficiency of processes and administrative tasks, with diverse use cases from Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, and Tunisia.

In South Africa, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) has deployed AI in various ways, including an AI Assistant on its website and on SARS MobiApp,[60] and reportedly conducts 75% of tax assessments using AI products, thus improving efficiency.[61] Its Department of Home Affairs plans to use AI for multi-lingual self-service kiosks in Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, and English.[62] Also, the South African National Space Agency developed an AI tool for early flood warnings and decision support.[63] Meanwhile, at least 257 municipalities and national departments use AI-powered apps like GovChat, eThekwini Mobile App, Fluicity and Go Vocal for civic engagement, complaint logging, and providing access to various municipal services.[64] In 2020, the country established a Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) to drive the country's 4IR transformation.[65]

In Tunisia, the Ministry of Finance uses an AI tool co-developed with the Tunis El Manar University for detecting tax fraud and enhancing accountability and efficiency in tax administration.[66] The National Business Register offers multilingual translation services powered by AI to improve user accessibility.[67] The Ministry of Industry and SMEs trained 5,000 public officials on AI Technologies in partnership with Google and InstaDeep.[68] Namibia is also integrating AI into its public sector, including the Bank of Namibia (BoN), which uses it for central and banking operations and also launched an AI and Robotics Accelerator.[69] In Egypt, Zaki, a chatbot deployed by the Central Bank of Egypt, provides information from the bank and enables clients to explore diverse offerings across various banks.[70]

Uganda is leveraging the use of AI to improve service delivery through enhanced transparency and efficiency. Similar to South Africa and Tunisia, its tax body, the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), analyses data sets related to tax administration using AI models, including data analytics and machine learning models to detect tax evasion and fraud.[71] Similarly, the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), deploys AI in verifying authenticity and identities to expedite registration of businesses and civil registration.

60   The South African Revenue Service (SARS), SARS AI Assistant allows taxpayers to interact online with SARS 24/7, SARS.Gov.za, 12 December 2024, 18 July 2025, https://www.sars.gov.za/latest-news/sars-ai-assistant-allows-taxpayers-to-interact-online-with-sars-24-7/

61   Barnard, Lillian. "AI in South Africa: Empowering Innovation, Transforming Industries, and Unlocking Potential." The Microsoft Cloud Blog, July 2025. https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-cloud/blog/2025/03/03/ai-in-south-africa-empowering-innovation-transforming-industries-and-unlocking-potential/.

62   Ndlovu, Nkosinathi. "Home Affairs to Roll out Restaurant-Style Self-Service Kiosks - TechCentral." TechCentral, July 2025. https://techcentral.co.za/home-affairs-self-service-kiosks/266271/.

63   Fouche, Daleen, and Daleen Fouche. "FLOOD DECISION SUPPORT TOOL - SANSA." SANSA - South African National Space Agency (blog), April 2022. https://www.sansa.org.za/2022/04/flood-decision-support-tool/.

64   GovChat. "GovChat." GovChat, https://www.govchat.org/; Efalia Engage. "Collaboration Platform." Efalia Engage, n.d. https://www.flui.city/capetown?lang=en; Interview with Dr. Scott Timcke, Senior Research Fellow, Research ICT Africa (Cape Town, July 2025); Interview with Shaun Russell, Product Owner and Head of Projects. Open Up (Cape Town, July 2025)

65   Shabangu, Pay. "Artificial Intelligence's (AI's) Implications for Strategic Communication." Communicare Journal for Communication Studies in Africa 43, no. 1 (July 2024): 36–47. https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S2957-79502024000100004&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en

66   Tunisie : Vers le lancement d'une application utilisant l'intelligence artificielle pour traquer la fraude fiscale," Tuniscope.com, September 8, 2023, https://www.tuniscope.com/ar/article/363565/economie/business/fiscale-03231614.

67   African Manager, "A partir de mars 2025, l'intelligence artificielle au service du Registre National des Entreprises," African Manager, February 14, 2025, https://africanmanager.com/a-partir-de-mars-2025-lintelligence-artificielle-au-service-du-registre-national-des-entreprises/.

68   Hana Trigui, Fatma Guerfali, and Emna Harigua-Souiai, "Exploring AI governance in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region: Gaps, efforts, and initiatives," Data & Policy, 2024, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/data-and-policy/article/exploring-ai-governance-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-mena-region-gaps-efforts-and-initiatives/867858AA465EEB06B5C43FF7048D8652

69   The Brief, BoN to integrate AI, machine learning across operations and financial sector, 2024, https://thebrief.com.na/2024/12/bon-to-integrate-ai-machine-learning-across-operations-and-financial-sector/; The Namibian, BoN saves N$6m by using AI, https://www.namibian.com.na/bon-saves-n6m-by-using-ai/

70   Proshare. "Unlocking the Potential: Artificial Intelligence Revolutionising Nigeria's Banking Sector." https://proshare.co/articles/unlocking-the-potential-artificial-intelligence-revolutionising-nigerias-banking-sector

71   Walakira Joshua, "No More Hiding as URA Deploys Super-Brain AI to Smoke Out Tax Defaulters," Mulengera News, https://mulengeranews.com/no-more-hiding-as-ura-deploys-super-brain-ai-to-smoke-out-tax-defaulters/

Ethiopia's e-government platforms have digitised over 900 public services, including the Fayda Digital ID system, which helps improve transparency and access to information.[72] The national identification card and international passport production processes have become more efficient due to AI-powered biometric systems.[73] AI is also utilised to enhance customer service response times in telecommunications through the use of chatbots, resulting in a 60% reduction in response times. Nigeria launched Service-Wise GPT, an AI assistant to streamline access to governance documents, automate policy drafting and official memos and provide real-time policy research assistance, and improve administrative tasks for civil servants.[74] Also, its Corporate Affairs Commission uses an AI-driven portal to simplify business registration processes and approvals.[75]

AI is also being used to analyse large datasets, enable data-driven policy development, increase transparency in governance, and support budget planning and resource allocation, as shown in Nigeria, Tunisia, South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Namibia. Tunisia utilised AI-powered tools for public policy development, such as to inform the drafting of its 2026–2030 National Development Plan, based on an analysis of sector-specific indicators and strategic priorities using AI.[76] Namibia's parliament adopted the e-Parliament Strategy to guide its adoption of AI tools for legislative research.[77] In line with the aspirations of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030, countries in the region, such as Angola, Mauritius, South Africa and Zimbabwe, have embraced AI for parliamentary usage. In 2023, the regional bloc's Council of Ministers approved the SADC Digital Transformation Strategy, which seeks to transform the region into an inclusive digital economy through the adoption of digital technologies that include AI.[78]

In addition, AI tools are being used to increase citizen access to legislative records, simplify complex government documents, and enable participation in public decision-making. In Kenya, Sauti ya Bajeti (A Voice of the Budget) is an AI-powered participatory budget platform by the Machakos County government that allows citizens to query, visualise, and track government expenditures in real time, fostering fiscal transparency and accountability.[79] Ghana has employed AI in the Civil Service, including for training, and in producing and disseminating e-newsletters for public communication.[80] The Senegalese government launched Awa, an AI model designed to integrate national languages, particularly Wolof. [81]

900
Public services

E-government platforms Digitised

Ethiopia

Sauti ya Bajeti

"A Voice of the Budget"

An AI-powered participatory budget platform

72 GSMA, AI in Ethiopia: Promising Use Cases for Development, April 2025, pp. 27–29.

73 Regula: Top-Notch ID Document Processing Worldwide: Cameroon. 2025. https://regulaforensics.com/blog/cameroonian-passport-processing/

74 CIO Africa, Nigeria Unveils AI Tool to Boost Public Services, https://cioafrica.co/nigeria-unveils-ai-tool-to-boost-public-services/

75 Punch Newspaper, CAC unveils AI-powered portal for 30-minute company registrations, https://punchng.com/cac-unveils-ai-powered-portal-for-30-minute-company-registrations/

76 La Presse, "Plan de développement 2026–2030 : l'intelligence artificielle utilisée pour définir les priorités stratégiques," La Presse de Tunisie, July 9, 2025, https://lapresse.tn/2025/07/09/plan-de-developpement-2026-2030-lintelligence-artificielle-utilisee-pour-definir-les-priorites-strategiques/

77 Nampa News, Namibia welcomes adoption of AI in Parliament operations https://www.nampa.org/text/22650098

78 Southern Africa: Harnessing AI to Strengthen SADC Parliamentary Effectiveness https://allafrica.com/stories/202506040067.html

79 Launch an AI-Powered Budget Platform for Inclusive Governance, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/the-open-gov-challenge/machakos-kenya-launch-an-ai-powered-budget-platform-for-inclusive-governance/

80 Civil Service week launches with focus on AI and automation https://gna.org.gh/2025/07/civil-service-week-launches-with-focus-on-ai-and-automation/

81 TSM Business, AWA: l'intelligence artificielle sénégalaise, une révolution technologique nationale, TSM Business, publié [date non précisée], consulté le 12 août 2025, https://tsmbusiness.media/awa-lintelligence-artificielle-senegalaise-une-revolution-technologique-nationale/

AI is seen as a catalyst for new business opportunities, driving economic growth, and enhancing national security. Ethiopia's Artificial Intelligence Institute (EAII) aims to harness AI for socio-economic transformation. Rwanda aims to position itself as Africa's top destination for AI higher education and research. The Senegalese government is positioning AI as a key driver of economic growth across various sectors, and key plans include reforming the education system to meet the evolving challenges and opportunities presented by AI and collaboration with Meta to build an AI data centre in Senegal.[82] In 2024, the Senegalese Ministry of Communication, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy, in partnership with the French Embassy and AI Hub Senegal, launched a seed fund of 59 million CFA francs (USD 98,222) to support the development of AI-based solutions.[83]

In Cameroon, agricultural extension services report that AI-powered pest identification apps have helped farmers to reduce crop losses by up to 25% in key pilot areas.[84] Uganda's Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with other institutions such as Makerere University, uses AI image recognition technologies to help farmers to identify pests and diseases that have either attached or are affecting their crops, by uploading a photo and getting a diagnosis and advice instantly.[85] Egypt and Kenya rolled out AI in their smart city projects (facial recognition CCTV, traffic monitoring) and digital ID systems.[86] Rwanda is also implementing AI technologies for identity management at borders,[87] AI-video surveillance and for predictive policing by law enforcement.[88]

AI-powered pest identification apps helped farmers reduce crop losses by 25%

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82 Senegal Steps Up Efforts to Develop Artificial Intelligence https://www.wearetech.africa/en/fils-uk/news/public-management/senegal-steps-up-efforts-to-develop-artificial-intelligence
83 Senegal Sets Up Fund to Support AI Adoption by Startups https://www.wearetech.africa/en/fils-uk/news/tech/senegal-sets-up-fund-to-support-ai-adoption-by-startups
84 Quartz Africa, "Cameroon Agric Startup Helps African Farmers Using AI," 2023. https://qz.com/africa/1680695/cameroon-agric-startup-helps-african-farmers-using-ai
85 Mak.CAD, "Development of Machine Learning Datasets for Crop Pest and Disease Diagnosis based on Crop Imagery and Spectrometry," https://air.ug/?page_id=3136 See also Mak.CAD, "AI in Agricaulture," https://air.ug/?page_id=3464
86 Smart City and Digital: Projects like Konza Technopolis (Kenya) inspire replicable models in Egypt https://aedic.eu/en/economy-and-development/smart-city-and-digital-projects-as-konza-technopolis-kenya-inspire-replicable-models-in-egypt/
87 TradeMark Africa hands over Rusizi 2 One Stop Border Post to Rwanda, paving way for enhanced cross-border trade https://trademarkafrica.com/trademark-africa-hands-over-rusizi-2-one-stop-border-post-to-rwanda-paving-way-for-enhanced-cross-border-trade/; Ultra modern e-gates good news https://www.newtimes.co.rw/article/68169/Opinions/ultra-modern-e-gates-good-news
88 How IT is shaping RNP's policing landscape https://www.police.gov.rw/media/news-detail/news/how-it-is-shaping-rnps-policing-landscape/?tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=777f929e429ea9693a042 38b1b7fa23e; Inside Rwanda Police's high-tech shift to safer, smarter policing https://police.gov.rw/media/news-detail/news/inside-rwanda-polices-high-tech-shift-to-safer-smarter-policing/

4.1.2 Private Sector and Tech Community

Various AI solutions are being implemented by the private sector, focusing on FinTech, HealthTech, AgriTech, and E-commerce/Logistics, with natural language processing and data labelling used to contextualise unique African content. As of 2024, Africa was reportedly home to at least 2,400 AI startups, with a majority in tech hubs like Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius and Egypt, working on sectors such as agriculture, health, education, corporate services, manufacturing, e-commerce, business intelligence and gaming.[89] There are over 5,000 AI professionals on the continent, and African AI startups received at least USD 220 million venture capital funding in 2024.[90]

Various private sector entities are making significant investments in the AI industry. In 2024, Microsoft and G42 launched a USD 1 billion initiative to develop a sustainable AI data centre in Kenya.[91] Also, in September 2025, Airtel commenced construction of its 44 MW sustainable data centre, which is expected to be the largest in East Africa, once completed in 2027.[92] In South Africa, Microsoft announced in March 2025 a USD 297 million investment to expand its cloud and AI in the country.[93] Google is funding the South African Centre for Artificial Intelligence Research (CAIR) for infrastructure and expertise to strengthen local AI capacity.[94] In February, the company also provided free access to its Gemini Code, Assist to enable African students, hobbyists, and freelance developers to write, debug, and manage code more efficiently and use generative AI to perform a variety of functions.[95] In September 2025, it announced that it would offer a free one-year subscription to its Google One AI Premium plan, which includes access to the Gemini Pro AI model to students, developers, researchers, and creators in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.[96] The company is also investing USD 9 million in African universities and research labs, and offers Gemini for Education free of charge.[97]

In July 2025, Cassava Technologies, in collaboration with Nvidia, announced a USD 720 million investment in compute power, starting with an initial deployment of 3,000 GPUs in South Africa, to be scaled up to 9,000 once they expand to hubs in Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria.[98] The AI-enabled data centres are expected to give governments, businesses, and researchers access to cutting-edge computing to drive innovation, train local AI models, and solve challenges in health, finance, and education. However, these investments are still way lower than the scale of investments announced by big tech companies in other regions, such as the USD 500 billion Stargate Project by OpenAI[99] and the USD 600 billion by Meta Platforms both in the US,[100] or Microsoft's USD 30 billion,[101] Nvidia's USD 15 billion, or Google's USD 6.8 billion investments in the UK[102]

Home to at least 2,400 AI companies over 5,000 AI professionals

89   State of Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Africa, https://assets.ctfassets.net/3iokqrmzb31b/6oWY1PPSe5ZRtfabJBSi4G/ac0db4e21ecceebd90018014f64a5fc0/State_of_Artificial_Intelligence_in_Africa.pdf

90   State of Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Africa, https://assets.ctfassets.net/3iokqrmzb31b/6oWY1PPSe5ZRtfabJBSi4G/ac0db4e21ecceebd90018014f64a5fc0/State_of_Artificial_Intelligence_in_Africa.pdf

91   Microsoft ties up with UAE-based AI firm to invest $1 bln in Kenya data center https://www.reuters.com/technology/microsoft-g42-invest-1-billion-kenya-build-data-center-2024-05-22/

92   Nxtra by Airtel Builds 44MW Data Centre in Kenya https://telcomagazine.com/news/airtel-starts-work-on-44mw-east-africa-data-centre-hub

93   Okamgba, Justice. "Microsoft Plans $297m AI Investment in South Africa - Punch Newspapers." Punch Newspapers, March 2025. https://punchng.com/microsoft-plans-297m-ai-investment-in-south-africa/.

94   Matias, Yossi. "Supporting the Future of AI Research in Africa and Globally." Google, July 2025.
       https://blog.google/intl/en-africa/company-news/outreach-and-initiatives/supporting-the-future-of-ai-research-in-africa-and-globally/.

95   Google launches free Gemini Code Assist in Kenya https://www.kbc.co.ke/google-launches-free-gemini-code-assist-in-kenya/; Gemini Code Assist: AI-first coding in your natural language
       https://codeassist.google/

96   Google is giving African Students Gemini Advanced for FREE https://tech-ish.com/2025/09/18/google-is-giving-african-students-gemini-advanced-for-free/

97   Transform teaching and learning with Gemini for Education https://edu.google.com/ai/gemini-for-education/

98   Cassava Technologies to invest $720m in African AI factory with Nvidia-report https://finance.yahoo.com/news/cassava-technologies-invest-720m-african-111625719.html

99   Announcing The Stargate Project https://openai.com/index/announcing-the-stargate-project/

100   Meta AI Spending Spree Set to Top $600 Billion Over 3 Years. Which Stocks Will Get a Boost, https://www.barrons.com/articles/meta-stock-price-ai-spending-broadcom-49ead3b8

101   Microsoft, Nvidia, other tech giants plan over $40 billion of new AI investments in UK https://www.cnbc.com/2025/09/16/tech-giants-to-pour-billions-into-uk-ai-heres-what-we-know-so-far.html

102   Google owner reveals £5bn AI investment in UK ahead of Trump visit https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crmek723dz9o

Several AI-powered tools are used to optimise and improve efficiency and introduce new products and services across sectors such as agriculture, health and finance. In Cameroon, startups in Silicon Mountain are developing AI solutions to address local problems, including agricultural yield prediction. South Africa has seen an emergence of generative AI for content creation, automation and personalised interactions; machine learning and predictive analytics for fraud detection, risk management and operations; and chatbots for enhancing customer service.[103] In July 2024, the country had at least 37 chatbot-focused start-ups. A notable example is Enlabeler, a data labelling app that provides high-quality human-annotated training datasets while also addressing youth unemployment by employing remote workers to clean data for AI models.[104] Another is Community Wolf, an AI-driven WhatsApp chatbot that enables reporting of crime or suspicious activities to private security firms and law enforcement.[105]

In Cameroon, Kiro'o Games, the country's first video game studio, integrates AI elements in its game development. In Namibia, AI and predictive analytics are used in sectors like agriculture (WildTrack), health, and finance.[106] The country also enabled YouTube monetisation, PayPal, and Apple Pay access, to empower local content creators and entrepreneurs, especially those producing in indigenous languages.[107] Senegal has deployed AI in AgriTech to optimise agricultural yields and forecast climatic conditions; and in FinTech to enhance financial services, detect fraud, and personalise banking. The locally developed Saytu Hemophilia voice chatbot offers health responses in Wolof to help in the management of the rare disease.[108] Ethiopian local innovators like Hepius have diagnostic support tools for clinicians.[109] Also, Farmer.Chat is an AI chatbot designed to empower Ethiopian extension agents and farmers with localised, on-demand advisory services.[110]

102 TMO Contributor. "What the SA Generative AI Roadmap Report Reveals." The Media Online, July 2025. https://themediaonline.co.za/2025/07/what-the-sa-generative-ai-roadmap-report-reveals/.

103 Tech Financials. "SA Startup Aims to Grow Africa's Footprint in AI and Data Labelling." Tech Financials, May 2022.

104 https://techfinancials.co.za/2022/05/19/sa-startup-aims-to-grow-africas-footprint-in-ai-and-data-labelling/.

105 Puchert, Daniel. "AI Brain Drain in South Africa." MyBroadband (blog), July 2025. https://mybroadband.co.za/news/ai/602692-ai-brain-drain-in-south-africa.html.
National Commission on Research, Science and Technology, Report on Task Force on the Fourth Industrial Revolution , https://www.ncrst.na/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/4IRTF-Final-Report.pdf

106 The Brief, Namibia moves to enable YouTube monetization, PayPal and Apple Pay, https://thebrief.com.na/2025/03/namibia-moves-to-enable-youtube-monetization-paypal-and-apple-pay/

107 Wolof Chatbot against Hemophilia in Senegal: An Innovation for awareness https://blog.baamtu.com/en/chatbot-wolof-contre-lhemophilie-au-senegal-une-innovation-pour-la-sensibilisation/

108 GSMA, AI in Ethiopia: Promising Use Cases for Development, April 2025; Hepius, Artificial Intelligence in Ethiopian Healthcare: Possibilities, Addis Ababa, 2023,

109 https://hepius.co/ai-in-ethiopian-healthcare-possibilities-and-challenges/

110 Ibid

In Zimbabwe, AI is used for fraud detection, customer support (e.g., chatbots), behavioural analytics, predictive modelling, and agriculture-based data analysis.[111] AI-enhanced tools have also been trialled for transcription of court proceedings and public hearings. In May 2022, the Zimbabwe Judicial Service Commission launched the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) and also the first paperless court in Zimbabwe – the Commercial Court Division of the High Court.[112] In Rwanda, Zipline has been using a drone delivery system to improve access to animal health, including services such as artificial insemination services in the countryside.[113] Also, the company uses its drones to collect and distribute blood and medical supplies to regional centres.[114] In Ghana, companies like AgroCenta and Esoko are integrating AI into mobile platforms that facilitate access to credible agricultural information to farmers. In the health sector, AI applications are being used for disease diagnosis and treatment, thus improving patient outcomes.[115] Also, companies like mPharma, MyDawa, and Mutti Online Pharmacy are enhancing the pharmaceutical supply chains.[116] In Kenya, university students at Kabarak University developed an AI-powered tool, Mama's Hub, that would enable health care workers to remotely monitor the conditions of pregnant women and their foetuses without physical visits to a hospital. [117]

There are various initiatives deploying AI to create Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools for local African languages. Tunisia's private sector demonstrates a vibrant adoption of AI, with startups and innovative companies specialising in areas like NLP, contributing to a local AI industry.[117] An example is TUNBERT, an AI model that understands the nuances of the Tunisian Arabic dialect.[119] The Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy has an initiative to support 100 SMEs in integrating Industry 4.0 solutions, creating 12 new startups and training 500 professionals.[120]

Similarly, there are several innovations in Ghana, such as Khaya, an open source AI-powered translator tailored for Ghanaian languages Twi, Dagbani, Ga, and Fante, which plans to expand to Nigeria, Burkina Faso; and Abena, which is an AI voice assistant that supports the Twi language.[121] Another is MazzumaGPT, which enables users to generate smart contract code and digital agreements through natural language prompts.[122] In addition, DeafCanTalk is an AI-powered app that enables bidirectional translation between sign language and spoken language, and has enhanced accessibility for deaf users.[123]

TUNBERT

12 New startups and training
500 Professionals
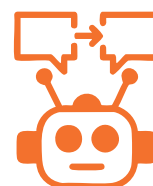
"Khaya"

Open source AI-powered translator tailored for Ghanaian languages

111 UNESCO & GIZ, "Artificial Intelligence Needs Assessment for Zimbabwe," Harare, March 2024

112 Zimbabwe's digital leap falls short in bridging access to justice gaps
https://www.apc.org/en/news/zimbabwes-digital-leap-falls-short-bridging-access-justice-gaps#:~:text=The%20Judiciary%20is%20doing%20this,allegedly%20due%20to%20network%20challenges.&text=This%20system%20facilitates%20digital%20access,plethora%20of%20internet%20governance%20issues.

113 Revolutionizing agriculture in Rwanda: Zipline's impact on animal health https://www.zipline.com/blog/revolutionizing-agriculture-in-rwanda-zipline-s-impact-on-animal-health

114 Jackson and D, Hance: How delivery drones are saving lives in Rwanda, Fortune Magazine, https://fortune.com/2019/01/07/delivery-drones-rwanda/

115 Atianashie Miracle A. and Chukwuma Chinaza Adaobi, "Transforming Healthcare in Ghana: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence in Hospitals", 01 January 2024, https://www.modernghana.com/news/1283034/transforming-healthcare-in-ghana-the-impact-of.html.

116 Annie Njanja, "mPharma raises $35 million in round joined by Tinder co-founder's JAM fund, Bharti executive", Tech Crunch, 5 January 2022, https://techcrunch.com/2022/01/05/mpharma-raises-35million-in-round-participated-by-tinder-co-founders-jam-fund-bharti-executive/?tpcc=tcplustwitter.

117 AI enhances maternal health care in Kenya, experts say https://www.voanews.com/a/ai-enhances-maternal-health-care-in-kenya-experts-say/7789467.html

118 Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy, "Stratégie Industrielle et d'Innovation Horizon 2035", tunisieindustrie.gov.tn, July 2022, http://www.tunisieindustrie.gov.tn/si2035/Livrable_L4_Dialogue_Sectoriel/L4-Dialogue_sectoriel.pdf.

119 Instadeepai, "tunbert," GitHub, https://github.com/instadeepai/tunbert.

120 Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy, "Stratégie Industrielle et d'Innovation Horizon 2035", tunisieindustrie.gov.tn, July 2022, http://www.tunisieindustrie.gov.tn/si2035/Livrable_L4_Dialogue_Sectoriel/L4-Dialogue_sectoriel.pdf.

121 Joy Online, "Preserving Ghanaian culture and empowering communities: The Story of Abena AI", 4 April 2023, https://www.myjoyonline.com/preserving-ghanaian-culture-and-empowering-communities-the-story-of-abena-ai/.

122 Kojo Apeagyei, "Facilitating Agency in Ghana's Tech Ecosystem: Lessons from Mazzuma and Ghana NLP", Research ICT Africa, 5 December 2024, https://researchictafrica.net/2024/12/05/facilitating-agency-in-ghanas-tech-ecosystem-lessons-from-mazzuma-and-ghana-nlp/.

123 Adonai Conrad Qenum, "Ghana's AI-Powered DeafCanTalk App Breaks Communication Barriers for the Deaf", We are Tech Africa, 19 May 2025, https://www.wearetech.africa/en/fils-uk/solutions/ghana-s-ai-powered-deafcantalk-app-breaks-communication-barriers-for-the-deaf

Big Tech companies, through initiatives like Mozilla's Common Voice and Meta's No Language Left Behind (NLLB) project, have expanded access to at least 32 African low-resource languages,[124] enabling many to access and share web content in their native languages.[125] In Ethiopia, Leyu, an initiative by iCog, provides high-quality datasets for low-resource Ethiopian languages such as Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Af-Somali and Sidama using a crowdsourcing model. In Rwanda, Babyl, a digital healthcare chatbot launched in 2016, is used to provide nurse and doctor consultations, prescriptions, and lab tests through mobile phones, and has two million users. [126]

In Uganda, Sunbird AI supports collection of information from the public on the issues that affect them to hold service providers accountable and contribute to improvement in service delivery.[127] Individuals can speak in a local language of their choice; their words are then translated and transcribed into English, and they receive feedback. Using organisations like SEMA Uganda, feedback on facilities such as health in public hospitals, and police services is analysed outside the facilities. Similarly, TRAC FM uses the Sunbird AI application to make sense of the views expressed on radio shows.[128]

Several AI-powered tools have been developed to promote financial inclusion. For example, MoMoKash, a nano-loan initiative by MTN Cameroon, uses AI for creditworthiness assessment, boosting financial inclusion.[129] The MTN group operates similar services in other countries where it has operations, such as Rwanda and Uganda. Also in Cameroon, the African Cloud platform by ST Digital offers local hosting options for AI applications.[130] In Ethiopia, Qena Decision is an AI-powered digital financial solution developed by Kifiya that provides credit scoring, credit limits and insights to support informed decision-making for financial institutions and businesses.[131] In South Africa, MTN and its digital platform business, Chenosis, in partnership with TransUnion Africa, introduced the AI-powered TransUnion Telco Data Score, a credit scoring solution that uses mobile phone call data records to assess the creditworthiness of subscribers with limited or no formal credit history to gain access to financial services.[132]In Nigeria, several banks have implemented chatbots, including Leo by United Bank for Africa (UBA), Ziva by Zenith Bank, Ivy by Fidelity Bank, Tamada by Access Bank, Octopus chatbot by Heritage Bank and Oxygen by Keystone Bank to enhance the efficiency of customer services. [133]

124 MBart 50, includes Afrikaans, Swahili, and Xhosa; M2M-100 includes: Afrikaans, Amharic, Fulah, Hausa, Igbo, Lingala, Malagasy, Northern Sotho, Somali, Swahili, Xhosa, and Yoruba; NLLB-200 includes: Acehnese, Afrikaans, Akan, Amharic, Bambara, Bemba, Chokwe, Dyula, Ewe, Fon, Hausa, Igbo, Kamba, Kikuyu, Kinyarwanda, Kimbundu, Kongo, Lingala, Luba-Kasai, Luganda, Mizolu, Plateau Malagasy, Mossi, Nyanja, West Central Oromo, Rundi, Sango, Shona, Somali, Southern Sotho, Swati, Swahili, Tamasheq, Tigrinya, Tsonga, Tswana, Tumbuka, Twi, Umbundu, Wolof, Xhosa, Yoruba, and Zulu.

125 Common Voice: African Languages https://www.mozillafoundation.org/en/what-we-fund/programs/common-voice-kiswahili-awards/; Meta, "New AI Model Translates 200 Languages, Making Technology More Accessible," About Meta Newsroom, 6 July 2022, https://about.fb.com/news/2022/07/no-language-left-behind-ai-translation; "Languages Available — NLLB-200," DL Translate documentation https://dl-translate.readthedocs.io/en/latest/available_languages/#nllb-200

126 Harnessing AI for Healthcare in Rwanda https://www.insead.edu/blog/hoffmann-global-institute-business-and-society/harnessing-ai-healthcare-rwanda

127 Sunbird AI, "Citizen Feedback: African language technology," https://sunbird.ai/portfolio/citizen-feedback/

128 Ibid.

129 Econuma: L'IA au service du crédit instantané: Défis et opportunités pour le Cameroun. April 2025. https://econuma.com/go-digital/lia-au-service-du-credit-instantane-defis-et-opportunites-pour-le-cameroun-1744289798

130

Business in Cameroon, "ST Digital Launches AI Hosting in Cameroon via African Cloud Platform," 2024.

131 https://www.businessincameroon.com/public-management/1102-14483-st-digital-launches-ai-hosting-in-cameroon-via-african-cloud-platform

132 Ibid

New Telco-Powered Credit Score Set to Transform Access to Finance for Millions of South Africans https://www.mtn.com/new-telco-powered-credit-score-set-to-transform-access-to-finance-for-millions-of-south-africans/#:~:text=This%20partnership%20between%20Transunion%20Africa,used%20in%20gr

133 oundbreaking%20alternative%20ways

Proshare. "Unlocking the Potential: Artificial Intelligence Revolutionising Nigeria's Banking Sector." https://proshare.co/articles/unlocking-the-potential-artificial-intelligence-revolutionising-nigerias-banking-sector

4.1.3 Civil Society

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are leveraging AI for advocacy, fact-checking, monitoring (of elections, hate speech and disinformation), digital literacy, public accountability, and community engagement.

Civil society actors use AI for fact-checking and to monitor and track patterns of harmful content such as disinformation, hate speech, and Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV). In Cameroon, CSOs have leveraged AI for sentiment analysis, data analytics of patterns of TFGBV, [134] advocacy, and translation of content into local languages.[135] In Lesotho, MISA Lesotho, in collaboration with Code for Africa, has launched CheckDesk, an AI-enabled platform aimed at assisting Lesotho citizens in detecting and combating the growing threat of disinformation. The platform utilises innovative AI-powered verification technologies and digital forensic techniques to unearth the truth behind suspected content.[136]

Mozambican initiatives such as MISA Check use AI-enabled platforms for election monitoring, tracking hate speech, and assessing disinformation flows. The African Infodemic Response Alliance (AIRA), which operates continent-wide, uses AI-assisted social media listening tools such as NewsWhip Spike, Meltwater, Google Trends and Google Alerts to track and analyse vast amounts of data from online platforms. It also uses its Africa Misinformation Portal (AMP), a web-based platform developed to curate information, label it using a specialised health taxonomy, translate it into at least 200 languages, geolocalise the data, and generate basic analytical reports to identify trends and patterns, which are shared widely with stakeholders.[137]

In Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria and Kenya, fact-checking organisations such as Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition, Africa Check, Dubawa, HaqCheck, and PesaCheck are deploying AI bots to verify viral claims circulating on digital communication platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp.[138] The Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition (including Fact-Check Ghana, Dubawa Ghana, and GhanaFact) actively used Full Fact AI tools for social media monitoring, activated crisis media rooms, and deployed AI-supported verification systems, bulk-SMS alerts, and WhatsApp chatbots across 45 local languages during the 2024 elections.[139] Penplusbytes also deployed an AI-powered Disinformation Detection Platform (DDP) to support real-time monitoring and analysis of social media narratives during Ghana's 2024 elections[140] Similarly, ahead of Rwanda's 2024 elections, a coalition comprising local media organisations and Africa Check partnered to fact-check information to ensure voters received accurate information.[141]

134   Pan-African Parliament, Pan-African Parliament Launches Technical Review of Groundbreaking Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity in Yaoundé. 2025
       https://pap.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2025-05-08/pan-african-parliament-launches-technical-review-groundbreaking

135   Cameroon Etranslate, June 2024. https://web.facebook.com/cameroonetranslate/posts/-exciting-news-introducing-cameroon-etranslates-new-ai-agent-were-thrilled-to-an/949846240484360/?

136   AI in Journalism:A Powerful Tool or Misinformation Contributor
       https://lesotho.misa.org/2025/05/21/ai-in-journalisma-powerful-tool-or-misinformation-contributor/#:~:text=This%20sharp%20rise%20in%20AI,equipped%20with%20resources%20and%20knowledge.

137   Africa Infodemic Response Alliance (hosted by the World Health Organization) https://www.ukhih.org/news/africa-infodemic-response-alliance-hosted-by-the-world-health-organization/

138   Rebecca Avusu, "AI Content Creation: Threat or Opportunity for African Journalism?", Penplusbytes, 4 August 2025, accessed 15 August 2025,
       https://penplusbytes.org/ai-content-creation-threat-or-opportunity-for-african-journalism/.

139   Full Fact, "Full Fact AI supports African fact checkers in year of elections", 13 December 2024, https://fullfact.org/blog/2024/dec/full-fact-ai-supports-african-fact-checkers/.

140   Penplusbytes, Defending Democracy: Penplusbytes Launches Disinformation Detection Platform (DDP) to Monitor and Combat Election Disinformation", 4 December 2024,
       https://penplusbytes.org/defending-democracy-penplusbytes-launches-disinformation-detection-platform-ddp-to-monitor-and-combat-election-disinformation/.

141   PRESS RELEASE: Rwandan media stakeholders join hands to promote credible information ahead of July 2024 election
       https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/blog/press-release-rwandan-media-stakeholders-join-hands-promote-credible-information#:~:text=Elections-,PRESS%20RELEASE:%20Rwandan%20media%20stakeholders
       %20join%20hands%20to%20promote%20credible,began%20on%2022%20June%202024.

In Zimbabwe, local initiatives like ZimFact and CITE's FactCheckZW conduct fact-checking and citizen engagement.[142] Nigerian civil society fact-checkers collaborated to debunk false claims by politicians during elections. In Cameroon, organisations such as DefyHate, through initiatives such as the #AfricaFactCheckingFellowship (AFFCameroon), have been instrumental in fighting disinformation using AI-powered tools.[143] The Namibia Fact Check project actively monitored political smear campaigns involving fake AI-generated content during the past elections.[144] In Nigeria, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) deployed a fact-checking bot on social media, which was used to track misinformation and disinformation during the country's 2023 general elections.[145]

Civil society is also engaging in advocacy and awareness on AI-related policy issues. Namibian non-government organisations (NGOs) are engaging in UNESCO AI stakeholder forums to help frame ethical and inclusive AI governance.[146] Meanwhile, Ethiopian civil society groups advocate for transparency in AI deployments and build coalitions for awareness campaigns on disinformation risks targeting marginalised groups. Also, Kenyan, Namibian, South African, Tunisian and Ugandan civil society actors engage in raising awareness on policy issues around AI-generated misinformation, surveillance, and data protection. Namibia's NGOs also engage in capacity-building and reporting on AI abuses by corporates.[147] In Nigeria, CSOs actively work to raise awareness about issues like data privacy and algorithmic bias, advocating for human-centric AI policies.[148]

Further, capacity-building initiatives by civil society organisations such as the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) have been critical in protecting digital rights. In Senegal, the coalition of journalists and civil society named SaytuSEN2024 was formed to fact-check information during the 2024 election period.[149] In Uganda, CIPESA, Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) and Alan Turing Institute have undertaken initiatives to shape the future and the governance of AI through research, advocacy and capacity building.[150] Regional fact-checking partnerships, such as Facebook's and Twitter's collaboration with Africa Check, AFP and PesaCheck during Kenya's 2022 elections, and the formation of election information centres in countries like Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Nigeria in previous elections, provided authoritative information about elections.[151] In Kenya, the Data Labelers Association of Kenya is a new initiative advocating for fair pay, mental health safeguards, and workers' rights in AI gig work.[152] Also, organisations like KICTANet have been involved in Kenya's AI strategy and policy development processes,[153] while coalitions such as FeCoMo have been promoting awareness and engagement on AI impacts and on platform accountability.[154]

MiLLi* project
has trained almost
1,000
young people
in Namibia

142 ZimFact, "About Us," ZimFact, https://zimfact.org/about-us/; "FactCheckZW – Zimbabwe," CITE Fact-Checking Platform, https://factcheck.cite.org.zw/

143 Changing Narratives on Information Integrity in Cameroon. A Journey of Fact-Checking, Media Literacy, and Digital Empowerment,
    https://defyhatenow.org/from-factsmatter237-to-affcameroon-and-winning-the-mil-river-award/#:~:text=It%20all%20started%20in%202020,adventurous%2C%20and%20full%20of%20discoveries.

144 IPPR, AI, cheapfakes coming for Namibian elections https://namibiafactcheck.org.na/news-item/ai-deepfakes-coming-for-namibian-elections/

145 Isaiah Oden David, Idowu Sulaimon Adeniyi, Aderonke Omotayo Aliu, Utilization of artificial intelligence in the democratization process of Nigeria, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Comprehensive
    Research https://www.multispecialityjournal.com/uploads/archives/20240321134121_B-24-02.1.pdf

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147 Action Namibia, AI, Biometrics and no protection from abuse, https://action-namibia.org/ai-biometrics-and-no-protection-from-abuse/

148 Patrick Egwu, "We can't do this alone": Nigerian fact-checkers teamed up to debunk politicians' false claims at this year's election,
    https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/we-cant-do-alone-nigerian-fact-checkers-teamed-debunk-politicians-false-claims-years-election accessed July 28, 2025.

149 State of Internet Freedom in Africa, 2024

150 UNESCO, "Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) - Civil Society Organizations (CSO) for Ethics of AI and Academic Network on AI Ethics and Policy,"
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151 State of Internet Freedom in Africa, 2024

152 Data Labelers Association speaks up for invisible workers: "Ultimately, it's about respect and human decency,
    https://gigpedia.org/resources/blogs/2025/data-labelers-association-speaks-up-for-invisible-workers-201cultimately-its-about-respect-and-human-decency

153 Kenya Sets Stage for AI Leadership with Landmark AI Convening https://www.kictanet.or.ke/kenya-sets-stage-for-ai-leadership-with-landmark-ai-convening/

154 Are AI models accelerating gender equality or reinforcing biases? https://fecomo.org/are-ai-models-accelerating-gender-equality-or-reinforcing-biases/

AI tools facilitate civic engagement and advocacy campaigns. In Senegal, the AI platform Jangat-App created for the 2024 presidential elections allowed voters to compare candidates' manifestos by theme, making them accessible to wide audiences.[155] In Uganda, AI is used to combat health disinformation and for civic messaging campaigns.[156] In Namibia, the MiLLi* project has trained almost 1,000 young people in all regions of Namibia on how to use media critically and reflectively.[157] Similarly, in Nigeria, Yiaga Africa and Infoip implemented "MyElectionBuddy", a WhatsApp conversation chatbot to enhance voters' education and engagement across the country. [158] During the anti-Finance Bill protests in Kenya, AI tools were used for online campaigns. Also, Kenyan activists have used counter-narratives to push back on disinformation campaigns. Grassroots and activist-driven hashtags such as #JusticeForGenZ, #SiriNiNumbers, and #RejectFinanceBill2024 were used during the anti-Finance Bill protests to push back against the official narratives, to demand justice, and to mobilise protestors.[159] Similarly, civil society in Ghana integrates AI into digital literacy, civic education campaigns and public accountability work.[160]

CSOs use AI for document analysis and public accountability, helping navigate government documents and surface under-represented issues. In South Africa, organisations like Open Up, Open Cities Lab (OCL), Harambee, and Geekulcha have deployed various AI tools. The OCL uses AI and NLP applications to analyse and simplify government financial documents to support access to information and public accountability by journalists, activists, and researchers.[161] In Nigeria, BudgIT's "Bimi" AI-powered chatbot democratises access to government data, advancing transparency and civic participation.[162] Also, PODUS by Citizens' Gavel is an AI tool that facilitates access to justice by prioritising cases related to emergencies, corruption and human rights violations and guides litigants to get assistance.[163] In Zimbabwe, OpenParlyZW has launched Hanzi, an AI-powered WhatsApp chatbot that provides citizens with on-demand access to parliamentary proceedings and information on how parliament works.[164]

AI tools are also being used to enhance internal productivity and operational efficiency. In Tunisia, chatbots, generative AI, data analytics tools, translation engines and AI-powered design tools are used by civil society to automate WhatsApp message chains, tailor Twitter threads for engagement, and schedule multilingual posts based on algorithmic audience insights.[165] Harambee, through its AI chatbot (Genesys Cloud Dialogue Engine), assists South African youths in their job search process and improves their capacity to manage both personal and professional aspects of their lives.[166] Lelapa AI offers InkubaLM, which is designed to support and enhance low-resource African languages.[167] As of February 2020, the Masakhane project had supported over 49 translation results for over 38 African languages.[168]

155 Osiris, Présidentielle 2024 – Un Jeune, Osiris.sn, consulté le 12 août 2025, https://www.osiris.sn/Presidentielle-2024-Un-Jeune.html.

156 To fight Ebola misinformation, AI mines old-tech radio data
     https://www.nature.com/articles/d44148-025-00187-1#:~:text=Scientists%20have%20used%20AI%20to,and%20overlooked%20in%20response%20measures.

157 Deutsche Welle Akademie, MiLLi*: A media literacy project inspires young Namibians
     https://akademie.dw.com/en/the-milli-movement-a-new-media-literacy-project-excites-and-inspires-young-namibians/a-52498785

158 This Day, Yiaga Africa, Infobip Offer Tech Solution to Enhance Voter Engagement in Nigeria,
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160 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Tackling Civic Participation Challenges with Emerging Technologies", 9 April 2025, accessed: 15 July 2025,
     https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/04/tackling-civic-participation-challenges-with-emerging-technol

161 Interview with Ella Alcock, Product Manager, Open Cities Lab. (Cape Town, July 2025)

162 Bimi Unveiled: A New Era of AI-Driven Governance and Open Data in Nigeria, https://budgit.org/bimi-unveiled-a-new-era-of-ai-driven-governance-and-open-data-in-nigeria/

163 Leadership newspaper, Citizens' Gavel Unveils Legal AI for Access to Justice, https://leadership.ng/citizens-gavel-unveils-legal-ai-for-access-to-justice/

164 OpenParlyZW, "OpenParlyZW's New AI WhatsApp Chatbot That Brings Parliament to Your Fingertips," OpenParlyZW, 15 April 2025,
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165 Enterprising in Scarcity: Powering Impact with AI & Tech — Inside Africa's Social Impact Summit https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/enterprising-scarcity-powering-impact-ai-tech-inside-ben-cheikh-wspwf/

166 Steven. "Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator," n.d. https://www.harambee.co.za/breaking-the-barriers-enabling-youth-employment-in-south-africa-through-digital-inclusion/.

167 Mzekandaba, Simnikiwe. "Local AI Model Is Melting Pot for African Languages." ITWeb, August 2024.
     https://www.itweb.co.za/article/local-ai-model-is-melting-pot-for-african-languages/j5alr7QABQo7pYQk.

168 Masakane Project https://www.masakhane.io/

4.1.4 Media and Journalists

The media sector is rapidly adopting AI for content creation, editing, transcription, data analysis for investigative journalism, fact-checking, combating disinformation, multilingual reporting and enhancing audience engagement.

AI is being used to improve fact-checking, investigative reporting, analyse large datasets, and detect patterns. In 2022, the African Fact-Checking Alliance (AFCA), in partnership with Meta, launched a one-year incubation programme for public interest media and CSOs in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger, to help develop fact-checkers focused on tackling misinformation and disinformation in local languages.[169] In Ghana, AI-driven analysis offers a powerful alternative for journalists to unlock new opportunities for investigative journalism and evidence-based reporting.[170] Namibian media professionals are similarly increasingly focusing on how AI affects misinformation and the reliability of public information.[171] Tunisian journalists are using AI tools for data analysis, audience analytics and website optimisation.[172]

Kenyan investigative reporters and CSOs increasingly use AI tools such as StoryEngine and large language model (LLM)-driven analytics to analyse budget documents, legislative bills, and procurement records at scale.[173] Mozambican journalists use simple fact-checking apps to process information faster. Senegalese journalists, in a coalition with civil society actors (SaytuSEN2024), filter information during election periods to ensure transparent and accurate public information.[174] Nigeria's and Uganda's newsrooms are exploring AI for engagement, marketing, and journalism. In Cameroon, media houses have partnered with rights organisations such as DefyHate to empower journalists, including bloggers, with skills and tools to develop and implement fact-checking mechanisms in their newsrooms and work routines.[175]

169 Strengthen fact-checking in indigenous languages https://factcheck.africa/strengthen-fact-checking-in-indigenous-languages-48473c48fc03
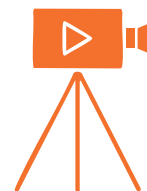
170 James Faraday Ocran, "Enhancing Ghanaian journalism with AI: balancing innovation and integrity", Joy Online, 6bSeptember, 2024, accessed 15 August 2025, https://www.myjoyonline.com/enhancing-ghanaian-journalism-with-ai-balancing-innovation-and-integrity/.

171 The Namibia, Namibian newsrooms starting to embrace AI ethically, 2023 https://www.namibian.com.na/namibian-newsrooms-starting-to-embrace-ai-ethically/

172 Aymen Zaghdoudi, Malek Khadhraoui et Gérald Holubowicz, "Journalisme et IA: enjeux et opportunités de l'intelligence artificielle en Tunisie," Pamt, July 21, 2025, https://pamt2.org/ressources_post/journalisme-et-ia-enjeux-et-opportunites-de-lintelligence-artificielle-en-tunisie/.

173 How Kenyans are using AI during protests https://advox.globalvoices.org/2025/07/12/how-kenyans-are-using-ai-during-protests/

174 WADR (West Africa Democracy Radio), Sénégal : Une alliance contre la désinformation en période électorale créée !, WADR, publié le 28 novembre 2023, https://wadr.org/fr/senegal-une-alliance-contre-la-desinformation-en-periode-electorale-creee/

175 Changing Narratives on Information Integrity in Cameroon. A Journey of Fact-Checking, Media Literacy, and Digital Empowerment https://defyhatenow.org/from-factsmatter237-to-affcameroon-and-winning-the-mil-river-award/#:~:text=The%20%23AfricaFactCheckingFellowship%20(AFFCameroon)%20is,ending%20with%20a%20particular%20assignment.

Uganda media and journalists are also deploying fact checkers such as PesaCheck,[176] Code for Africa (CfA), Debunk Media Initiative,[177] and Africa Check[178] to combat disinformation and misinformation and to hold those responsible accountable.

Journalists use AI for content gathering, editing, transcription, news generation, content planning, and automated summary generation, speeding up workflows and publishing more inclusive content. In South Africa, over 80% of journalists use AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Otter, and Canva for productivity, content drafting, editing, transcription, fact-checking, and research.[179] In Namibia, 73% of journalists use AI chatbots for work.[180] Tunisian journalists are exploring AI tools for editorial content production, text translation, and nascent generative AI use for multimedia content.[181] Media houses and journalists across the study countries, including Uganda,[182] Zambia,[183] and Zimbabwe, use AI tools for transcription, automating summary generation, content planning and translation. Kenyan media outlets like Nation Media Group and Tuko.com employ AI for content personalisation, speech-to-text services, and multilingual reporting, broadening their reach across the country's diverse linguistic communities.

AI-powered translation engines and automated transcription services can facilitate multilingual reporting, thereby expanding the reach of broadcast media and ensuring news is communicated in languages people understand. Mozambican journalists use AI apps to enhance multilingual reporting. In Zimbabwe, AI-generated avatars like Alice are delivering digital news bulletins, offering a glimpse into the future of broadcast media.[184] In 2025, Nigeria's TVC News debuted AI-enabled anchors in five languages (English, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and Pidgin).[185] Cameroon media are piloting automated transcription services for interviews in local languages like Fulfulde and Ewondo. [186]

Media regulators are also central in ensuring the responsible and ethical use of AI. In South Africa, the Press Council has developed a guidance note on the ethical use of AI for journalists.[187] Similarly, the Media Council of Kenya developed a media guide to equip media enterprises and journalists with the knowledge and tools to leverage AI's potential while managing its risks.[188] In 2023, several media executives, scholars and activists joined a conglomeration of international organisations and experts to develop a charter aimed at guiding the use of AI in the media.[189]

over 80%
of journalists in South Africa use AI tools

176   Code for Africa, "About Us," https://codeforafrica.org/about/

177   Northern Uganda Media Club, "Debunk Initiative arms journalists in northern Uganda with fact-checking skills' (NUMEC," 2 August 2023) https://numec.org/debunk-initiative-arms-journalists-in-northern-uganda-with-fact-checking-skills/

178   Africa Check, "About Us," https://africacheck.org/about-us

179   Adjin-Tettey, Theodora Dame, Tigere Muringa, Samuel Danso, and Siphumelele Zondi. "The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Contemporary Journalism Practice in Two African Countries." Journalism and Media 5, no. 3 (June 2024): 846–860. https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia5030054; Wright, Emily, Jay Barchas-Lichtenstein, Samuel Jens, and Amy Mitchell. "A Window into AI and Journalism in Africa: Perspectives from Journalists and the South African Public - Center for News, Technology & Innovation." Center for News, Technology & Innovation, April 2025. https://cnti.org/article/a-window-into-ai-and-journalism-in-africa-perspectives-from-journalists-and-the-south-african-public/?_gl=1*w10cmo*_ga*NjgzMTc5ODI2LjE3NTM0NTMxMTI.*_ga_TXMKK4H4G2*c zE3NTM0NTMxMTEkbzEkZzEkdDE3NTM0NTMxNzAkajEkbDAkaDA.

180   The Namibian, Namibia Media Trust research shows 73% of Namibian reporters use AI tools for editing, transcription, news gathering, ideation, https://www.namibian.com.na/73-of-journalists-use-chatgpt-for-work-report/

181   Aymen Zaghdoudi, Malek Khadhraoui et Gérald Holubowicz, "Journalisme et IA: enjeux et opportunités de l'intelligence artificielle en Tunisie," Pamt, July 21, 2025, https://pamt2.org/ressources_post/journalisme-et-ia-enjeux-et-opportunites-de-lintelligence-artificielle-en-tunisie/.

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183   How Zambian Journalists are Using Artificial Intelligence in Newsrooms https://www.ictworks.org/zambian-journalists-ai-newsrooms/

184   Paul McNally, "Zimbabwe has built an AI newsreader, but she isn't coming for your job", 10 October 2023, https://developai.substack.com/p/zimbabwe-has-built-an-ai-newsreader.

185   TVC News, TVC News Debuts First AI Enabled Anchors in Five Languages, https://www.tvcnews.tv/tvc-news-debuts-first-ai-enabled-anchors-in-five-languages/

186   Taylor & Francis Online, Important but unpopular: a critical look at the political economy of indigenous language film production in Cameroon. 2025. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14725843.2025.2488373?src=

187   Press Council South Africa and Press Council South Africa. "Guidance Note on Artificial Intelligence." The Press Council of South Africa (blog), October 2024. https://presscouncil.org.za/2023/11/28/press-council-of-sa-pcsa-guidance-notes/?

188   Media Guide on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Kenya, Media Council of Kenya https://mediacouncil.or.ke/sites/default/files/downloads/MEDIA%20GUIDE%20ON%20THE%20USE%20OF%20ARTIFICIAL%20INTELLIGENCE%20IN%20KENYA.pdf

189   CIPESA Joins International Initiative to Develop "AI Charter in Media" https://cipesa.org/2023/09/cipesa-joins-international-initiative-to-develop-ai-charter-in-media/

4.1.5 Academia

Academic institutions are crucial for integrating AI into curricula, conducting research, building capacity, and facilitating public dialogue on AI policy, ethics and governance.

Academia plays a key role in skills development by offering AI-related courses and embedding AI ethics into curricula. In Tunisia, 13 Tunisian universities have developed a five-year strategy for integrating AI in higher education and scientific research,[190] while its educational institutions, such as the National School of Computer Sciences and the National School of Engineers of Tunis, offer comprehensive AI programmes.[191] Similarly, Kenyan academic institutions like Strathmore University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT), and the Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT), have begun developing AI-focused research programmes. Cameroonian universities have also started offering AI-related courses. For instance, ActivSpaces in Douala and developing tech communities in Buea, known as Silicon Mountain, offer essential support for AI startups.[192] In South Africa, Develop AI trains journalists on effective and responsible use of AI and supports them in designing AI projects across sectors.[193]

Ghanaian universities such as Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the University of Ghana and Ashesi University have introduced programmes in AI and data science, some developed in partnership with IBM and Google.[194] In July 2025, Google opened its first AI Community Centre in Accra that will provide AI training programmes, workshops, and collaborative opportunities for developers, students, and creators.[195] The Ghana Innovation Hub, backed by the Ministry of Communications and the World Bank, and Ghana Tech Hub, provide training and resources for AI startups, entrepreneurs and IT professionals.[196] Other notable hubs include Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology (MEST), iSpace Foundation, Ovation Hall, and Kumasi Hive, which also provide training and support programmes to startups.[197] The Ministry of Education and UNESCO have launched initiatives to embed coding, robotics, and AI into the national curriculum from primary schools to university levels.[198]

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Tunisian universities have developed a **five-year strategy** for integrating AI in higher education and scientific research

190 African Manager, "L'intelligence artificielle est un moyen efficace pour améliorer la qualité du système éducatif ainsi que pour atteindre l'indépendance scientifique et numérique," African Manager, April 11, 2025, https://africanmanager.com/lintelligence-artificielle-est-un-moyen-efficace-pour-ameliorer-la-qualite-du-systeme-educatif-ainsi-que-pour-atteindre-lindependance-scientifique-et-numerique/.

191 African Manager, "Un institut tunisien de l'intelligence artificielle devra voir le jour à la prochaine rentrée universitaire," African Manager, April 16, 2024, https://africanmanager.com/un-institut-tunisien-de-lintelligence-artificielle-devra-voir-le-jour-a-la-prochaine-rentree-universitaire/.

192 The Silicon Mountain: Highlighting the Cameroonian Tech Startup Ecosystem https://theouut.com/silicon-mountain-began-in-2006-when-a-group-of-young-buea-web-developers-began-experimenting-with-technology-and-forming-a-community/

193 Sofiullahi, Abdulwaheed. "How Journalism Groups in Africa Are Building AI Tools to Aid Investigations and Fact-Checking." Global Investigative Journalism Network, October 2024. https://gijn.org/stories/africa-journalism-building-ai-investigations-fact-checking/.

194 AI Ghana, "AI Education and Talent Development in Ghana", https://aighana.net/ai-education-talent-development-ghana/.

195 Esinam Jemimah Kuatsinu, "Google opens first AI Community Center in Accra", Ghanaian Times, 29 July 2025, https://ghanaiantimes.com.gh/google-opens-first-ai-community-centre-in-accra/

196 MDF, "The Ghana Innovation Hub", accessed 15 August 2025, https://www.mdf.nl/assignments/the-ghana-innovation-hub.

197 AI Ghana, "AI Education and Talent Development in Ghana", https://aighana.net/ai-education-talent-development-ghana/; Aspen Network for Development Entrepreneurs, "Kumasi Hive business accelerator", https://ghana.ecomap.tech/resources/kumasi-hive-business-accelerator.

198 Severious Kale-Dery, "Ghana makes strides in integrating AI into curricula", Graphic Online, 30 September 2024, https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/education/ghana-news-ghana-makes-strides-in-integrating-ai-into-curricula.html#:~:text=Ghana%20is%20one%20of%2015,the%20practical%20applications%20of%20AI

The University of Namibia offers courses on data science, cybersecurity and blockchain, and has a virtual institute in AI and a High-Performance Computing Centre (HPC).[199] An AI Teacher Project is being run in some Namibian High Schools in Windhoek.[200] Likewise, in Ethiopia, platforms such as Eneza/Knowledge+ provide personalised learning for rural students. In Uganda, universities such as Makerere,[201] Cavendish,[202] ISBAT,[203] and Muni[204] have developed programmes on AI and integrated them in their study curricula.

Academia and research institutions are also playing a central role in AI research to provide evidence to inform policy development. South African institutions such as the Centre for Artificial Intelligence Research (CAIR), which connects nine research groups across six universities, the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution South Africa (C4IR-SA) and the University of Pretoria's Data Science for Social Impact, play a critical role in AI research and have contributed to national AI policy development.[205] Organisations such as Khulisa Social Solutions use AI to turn real-life experiences of learners, educators, and communities into practical solutions to help communities address local challenges such as violence, trauma, and substance abuse.[206] Egypt hosts several AI research and development centres, including Nile University's AI Centre, the American University in Cairo's AI Lab, Cairo University's AI Research Centre, and the Applied Innovation Centre (AIC). These institutions focus on advancing AI research, fostering academic–industry collaboration, and promoting innovation, with AIC emphasising practical application, technology transfer, and economic development.

In 2024, Ghana announced the establishment of a National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Accra, designed to be a hub for research, development, and innovation.[207] In Senegal, the Initiative for the Development of Artificial Intelligence (IDIA) is a research project that aims to address the lack of data and evidence on AI in French-speaking Africa.[208] Namibia is in the process of establishing a National AI Institute by the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST) to coordinate AI research and development, foster innovation, and develop new systems and products for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).[209]

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199 Artificial intelligence readiness assessment report: Namibia, UNESCO https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000394686
200 NBC News, AI transforms education in Windhoek schools, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jJqRYr0gSw
201 See for instance, Makerere University, "Makerere Launches AI and Data Science Centre to Drive Africa's Technological Development," (Makerere University News, 13 March 2025) https://news.mak.ac.ug/2025/03/makerere-launches-ai-and-data-science-centre-to-drive-africas-technological-development/; Makerere University College of Computing & Information Sciences, "Artificial Intelligence (Machine Learning& Deep learning) with PYTHON," https://cocis.mak.ac.ug/cipsd/artificial-intelligence-machine-learning-deep-learning-with-python/
202 Cavendish University Uganda, "Bachelor of Science in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence," https://www.cavendish.ac.ug/bachelor-of-science-in-data-science-and-artificial-intelligence/
203 ISBAT University, "Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning (BSC. AI & ML)," https://isbatuniversity.ac.ug/bachelor-of-science-in-artificial-intelligence-machine-learning-bsc-ai-ml/
204 Muni University, "Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence," https://muele.muni.ac.ug/course/index.php?categoryid=42
205 Gwagwa, Authur, Erika Kraemer-Mbula, Nagla Rizk, Isaac Rutenberg, and Jeremy De Beer. "Artificial Intelligence (AI) Deployments in Africa: Benefits, Challenges and Policy Dimensions." The African Journal of Information and Communication (AJIC), no. 26 (January 2020). https://doi.org/10.23962/10539/30361.
206 Nefdt, Ashleigh. "How a Local NPO Is Using AI to Tackle Struggles at Schools." Good Things Guy, April 2025. https://www.goodthingsguy.com/people/how-a-local-npo-is-using-ai-to-tackle-struggles-at-schools/.
207 GreenViews, "Artificial Intelligence in Ghana: Opportunity or Challenge?", 9 May 2025, https://greenviewsresidential.com/artificial-intelligence-in-ghana/
208 Initiative for the Development of Artificial Intelligence (IDIA): French-speaking policy research network https://idrc-crdi.ca/fr/ce-que-nous-faisons/projets-que-nous-soutenons/projet/initiative-pour-le-developpement-de
209 Artificial intelligence readiness assessment report: Namibia, UNESCO https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000394686

4.1.6 Individuals and the General Public

AI-powered translation services, auto-captioning, and text-to-speech tools have expanded accessibility of digital content for vernacular language speakers, non-literate populations, and persons with disabilities. Users across countries like Cameroon, Kenya, Tunisia, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and South Africa can access relevant digital content in their native languages, including in accessible formats.

Across the study countries, people are using AI for video editing, music production, and graphic design, leading to a rise in locally produced digital content. Social media users are also able to leverage various AI features on various platforms to enhance their content creation. Also, in sectors such as agriculture, education and health, users are able to access relevant digital content and essential information. AI tools such as Farmer.Chat in Ethiopia, AgroCenta in Ghana and Saytu Hemophilia voice chatbot are key.

Other tools are enabling and empowering communities to engage and participate in governance. Tools such as Community Wolf (South Africa) allow reporting of suspicious activities in local languages. Similarly, Bimi, an AI-powered chatbot in Nigeria, Sauti Ya Bajeti in Kenya and South Africa's SARS chatbot, GovChat, and Go Vocal applications are notable examples.

4.2 Challenges and Risks of AI to Digital Rights and Democracy

While AI offers significant opportunities, its deployment and governance in Africa pose complex risks to civic space and digital rights that often intersect with existing vulnerabilities. Across the study countries, there are prominent and often similar risks, as explored below.

4.2.1 Proliferation of Disinformation and Election Manipulation

AI-generated misinformation and disinformation, particularly deepfakes and automated bots, are a growing threat to democratic processes, as they can be used to manipulate public opinion and influence elections. The World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Risk Report described AI-generated misinformation and disinformation as a top global risk. [210]

In many of the study countries, such as Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Rwanda, AI-generated media, including deepfakes and automated social media smear campaigns, have been employed by political actors to shape narratives to mislead the public, misrepresent political endorsements, and discredit opposition figures.[211]

During South Africa's 2024 elections, a deepfake video of U.S. President Donald Trump published on TikTok and X in March 2024 was used to endorse the MK Party.[212] During the same period, a video of former U.S. president Joe Biden "made with *TryParrotAI.com*" was circulated on social media, showing him threatening to sanction South Africa if the African National Congress won the elections.[213] In July 2024, a video of Bill Gates was shared claiming the billionaire philanthropist had launched 'Ento Milk', a form of "maggot milk" in the country.[214] In June 2025, an article from News Vine, a popular satire website, claiming that Afrikaans "refugees" to the USA were "just a bunch of car guards" intended as a joke, was deliberately rewritten using GenAI and posted on *AfroMambo.com* to look more like actual news.[215] In July 2025, a deepfake video was shared on Facebook showing a leading South African epidemiologist, Prof. Salim Abdool Karim, in a TV news interview purportedly from the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), displaying a quote that "Everyone who received the Covid-19 vaccine is literally a walking corpse."[216]

No. 1 threat.
AI-generated misinformation and disinformation

The World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Risk Report

210 *The Global Risks Report 2024, World Economic Forum, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2024.pdf*

211 *State of Internet Freedom in Africa 2024: Africa's Electoral Democracy and Technology: Pitfalls and Promises*
     https://cipesa.org/wp-content/files/reports/State_of_Internet_Freedom_in_Africa_Report_2024.pdf

212 *Victor Kapiyo, South Africa's Elections: A Call for Vigilance Amidst the Rising Tide of Disinformation,*
     https://cipesa.org/2024/05/south-africas-elections-a-call-for-vigilance-amidst-the-rising-tide-of-disinformation/

213 *US president Joe Biden did not warn of South African sanctions if ruling ANC wins 2024 elections – ignore AI-generated video*
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/us-president-joe-biden-did-not-warn-south-african-sanctions

214 *No, Bill Gates hasn't launched maggot milk, false claim uses old video of discontinued South African dairy alternative*
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/no-bill-gates-hasnt-launched-maggot-milk-false-claim-uses

215 *No, South African 'refugees' to the US weren't 'just a bunch of car guards' https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/no-south-african-refugees-us-werent-just-bunch-car-guards*

216 *Deepfake alert: AI-generated video falsely portrays well-known health expert criticising Covid-19 vaccines*
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/deepfake-alert-ai-generated-video-falsely-portrays-well

In November 2024, during Namibia's elections period, an AI-generated video of former U.S. President Joe Biden purportedly expressing support for the ruling Swapo Party and its then presidential election candidate Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah was circulated online.[217] Other videos encouraged viewers to vote for the Swapo Party, not to vote for the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC), while another purported to show the 'collapse' of then-candidate and current President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, to push the narrative that she was old and unwell. During the period, the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) issued warnings and alerts on disinformation during the country's elections.[218]

In Kenya's 2022 elections and subsequent protests, deepfake technology and micro-targeted disinformation were used to mislead voters and undermine public trust.[219] On TikTok, a deepfake video claimed Kenya's former electoral commission chair would open 2022 election servers and that Raila Odinga had won with a big margin against the incumbent president. Also, a viral audio clip attributed to President William Ruto claimed that he accepted that his wealth came from corrupt deals.[220]

Several tactics were also used, including doctored newspaper headlines, misleading opinion polls, and fabricated quotes falsely attributed to political candidates.[221] Journalists and fact-checkers who attempted to correct misinformation were attacked by AI-driven fake accounts. Some of the posts were gendered, with female candidates facing targeted attacks. Also, state-aligned narratives through hashtags such as #BBCForChaos, #DogsOfWar, #ArrestHanifa, and #Tulienitubonge[222] were extensively used during the anti-Finance Bill protests, to manipulate social media algorithms and to push narratives, criticise opponents, and spread disinformation.

Also, deepfake videos of CNN's Fareed Zakaria's videos highlighting Kenya's role in peace diplomacy were shared in February 2025, including by Kenya's Foreign Affairs Principal Secretary Dr. Korir Sing'oei.[223] In June 2025, another deepfake video of Fareed was shared on TikTok, Instagram, X and YouTube showing a US-based journalist addressing tensions between Kenya and Tanzania, shortly after the arrest in Tanzania of Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi.[224] In June 2025, another deepfake video of Fareed was shared on TikTok, Instagram, X and YouTube, showing a US-based journalist addressing tensions between Kenya and Tanzania, shortly after the arrest in Tanzania of Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi. [225] Another video bearing an AI watermark shared on TikTok in July 2025 showed President Ruto announcing his resignation. In September 2025, a viral AI-generated image purporting to be of Kenya's National Youth Service recruits forming the word "WANTAM" (meaning "one term"), a slogan used by President Ruto's critics, was shared on social media.

217 IPPR, Countering #eleCtions2024 mis- & disinformation
     https://ippr.org.na/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Bulletin-5.pdf
218 Eagle FM, ECN Warns Against Fake Voting Results on social media
     https://www.facebook.com/EagleFMNam/videos/ecn-warns-against-fake-voting-results-on-social-mediathe-electoral-commission-of/2290730411296030/
219 Tirus Muya Maina, 'Artificial Intelligence in Digital Activism: Kenya Finance Bill Protests', International Journal of Scientific Research in Multidisciplinary Studies, Vol. 11, Issue 1, 2025, pp. 20–28,
     https://www.isroset.org/pdf_paper_view.php?paper_id=3778&3-ISROSET-IJSRMS-10196.pdf
220 BBC Africa, 'Kenya Elections 2022: Deepfake Audio of William Ruto', BBC News, London, BBC, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-62657797
221 AI Regulations in Elections: Combating Digital Disinformation in Kenya's 2027 elections
     https://oslocenter.no/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/AI-Regulation-in-Elections-Combating-Digital-Disinformation-in-Kenyas-2027-Elections-report.pdf
222 Misinformation Sentiment & Trend Analysis, Baraza Media Lab, https://barazalab.com/resources/baraza-research-new/misinformation-sentiment-trend-analysis/
223 Shock, disbelief after Foreign Affairs PS shares CNN deepfake video praising Kenya's peace effort in Sudan
     https://www.citizen.digital/news/shock-disbelief-after-foreign-affairs-ps-shares-cnn-deep-fake-video-praising-kenyas-peace-effort-in-sudan-n357975
224 No, CNN's Fareed Zakaria did not support Tanzania's crackdown on activists – viral video is fake
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/no-cnns-fareed-zakaria-did-not-support-tanzanias-crackdown
225 Ignore AI-generated images of Kenyan protester and police officer with rifles and tear gas
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/ignore-ai-generated-images-kenyan-protester-and-police

In Rwanda, at least 464 pro-government propagandists' accounts were found in June 2024 to be using Large Language Models (LLMs), including ChatGPT and related AI tools, to mass-produce at 650,000 messages designed to simulate authentic support on X, thus crowding out government critics.[226] During Cameroon's 2024 municipal elections, social media monitoring showed over 50 instances of complex disinformation campaigns using AI-generated images and deepfake videos aimed at opposition candidates.[227] In September 2025, ahead of the upcoming January 2026 elections, a manipulated video circulated on social media showing Uganda's president, Yoweri Museveni, pleading with citizens to vote for him one last time, was found to have been doctored from a previous event he attended with the Egyptian president in August 2025.[228]

Similarly, during Nigeria's 2023 general elections, a fake audio circulated online depicted a secret conversation between leaders of the biggest opposition party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), planning to compromise elections.[229] In January 2025, an image generated on Grok was circulated claiming that the Central Bank of Nigeria had unveiled a new N5,000 note bearing the face of President Bola Tinubu.[230] In February 2025, a video made on "ElonTalks.com" showing U. S. president Donald Trump saying he will liberate Biafra from Nigeria was shared on Facebook. Again, a deepfake video of Nigerian influencer Aproko Doctor claiming he had developed a product that cures hypertension was shared on Facebook.[231] In August 2025, an AI-generated image was shared on Facebook showing that a newly constructed flyover had collapsed in Lafia, in northern Nigeria.[232] In September 2025, a viral video on Facebook claimed that Finland had labelled Nigeria's chief of defence staff, General Christopher Musa, a terrorist.[233]

In Ethiopia, deepfake videos of athletes Haile Gebrselassie and Kenenisa Bekele claiming they had launched a mobile app were circulated on TikTok and Facebook in January 2025.[234] Also, cloned voices attributed to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed were circulated on social media.[235] Notably, synthetic news articles and algorithmic amplification on Facebook contributed to hate speech and incitement to violence during the Tigray conflict in 2020-2022.[236] The content was used to intimidate journalists and activists, particularly in conflict-prone regions such as Amhara and Oromia. Experts have warned that emerging tools could fan ethnic divisions and erode trust in democratic processes.[237]

226 Pro-Kigali propagandists caught using Artificial Intelligence tools https://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/15040/pro-kigali-propagandists-caught-using-artificial-intelligence-tools
227 Cameroon Watch, 'Cameroonian Digital Actors Declaration on the Challenges of Artificial Intelligence.' June 2023.
     https://civicwatch.cm/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CAMEROONIAN_DIGITAL_ACTORS_DECLARATION_ON_THE_CHALLENGES_OF_ARTIFICIAL.Pdf
228 Uganda: Manipulated Video Shows President Yoweri Museveni Pleading With Ugandans to Vote for Him One Last Time https://allafrica.com/stories/202509230202.html; Video of Uganda's Yoweri Museveni
     saying 2026 presidential bid will be his last is doctored https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.74XF264
229 How AI is impacting policy processes and outcomes in Africa https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-ai-is-impacting-policy-processes-and-outcomes-in-africa/
230 Nigeria's central bank has not unveiled a new N5,000 note – ignore AI-generated image
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/nigerias-central-bank-has-not-unveiled-new-n5000-note-ignore
231 Ignore AI-generated video of Nigerian celebrities promoting nonexistent hypertension cure
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/ignore-ai-generated-video-nigerian-celebrities-promoting
232 Viral images don't show flyover collapse in Nigeria's Nasarawa state – they are from AI-generated video
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/viral-images-dont-show-flyover-collapse-nigerias-nasarawa
233 No evidence Finnish government labelled Nigeria's defence chief Christopher Musa a terrorist
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/no-evidence-finnish-government-labelled-nigerias-defence
234 Kirubel Tesfaye, Have Renowned Ethiopian Athletes Unveiled a New Mobile Gaming App to Engage Fans?, HaqCheck, 11 January 2025,
     https://haqcheck.org/have-renowned-ethiopian-athletes-unveiled-a-new-mobile-gaming-app-to-engage-fans/.
235 HaqCheck, Is the audio of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed at a Prosperity Party meeting real?, HaqCheck, 1 June 2021,
     https://haqcheck.org/is-the-audio-of-prime-minister-abiy-ahmed-at-a-prosperity-party-meeting-real/
236 Human Rights Watch, 'Ethiopia: Social Media Platforms Failed to Adequately Moderate Genocidal Content During Tigray War', Business & Human Rights Resource Centre,
     https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/ethiopia-social-media-platforms-failed-to-adequately-moderate-genocidal-content-during-tigray-war-study-finds/.
237 Deutsche Welle, 'AI Disinformation Could Threaten Africa's Elections', 23 February 2025,
     https://www.dw.com/en/ai-disinformation-could-threaten-africas-elections/a-71698840.

In Zambia, an AI-generated image shared on social media in November 2023 claimed that Chinese technology company ZTE had a cellphone factory in Zambia.[238] In Senegal, a viral video was spread in March 2024, wrongfully depicting President Faye asking France to "leave Senegal alone".[239] In Tanzania, a photo showing a large crowd of Tanzanians lining up for a job interview at the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) was shared on Facebook in April 2025.

From the foregoing, AI-generated disinformation is a present and growing threat to electoral integrity and public opinion across Africa. Even in countries without explicit documented deployment, the potential and risks are widely acknowledged. Overall, ongoing trends signify a pervasive challenge that will make it harder for citizens to engage in informed public discourse and erode trust in democratic processes.

It is noteworthy, however, that across the study countries, various actors have implemented AI-enabled measures to counteract the spread of disinformation. Some promising initiatives were noted in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia. As detailed in sections 4.13 and 4.14, in South Africa, AI-powered bots were used to mitigate the spread of disinformation during the 2024 election period, and Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) recorded online attacks against journalists, which tech platforms largely failed to act on.[240] In Kenya, during the 2022 elections, there were various initiatives to monitor disinformation online, including by Umati,[241], and fact-checking initiatives like PesaCheck and the African Infodemic Response Alliance have developed AI-based verification tools. Other fact-checking efforts include initiatives by Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition, HaqCheck in Ethiopia, iVerify in Nigeria, and Soleil Check in Senegal, which are active in combating disinformation and are deploying AI tools and bots to automate fact-checking and verify viral claims.[242]

Based on the foregoing, it appears that countries acknowledge the threat of disinformation, yet specific mitigation measures are largely insufficient and are likely to struggle with the scale and sophistication of AI-driven disinformation.

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238 Mobile phone factory in Zambia? No, image made with artificial intelligence https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/mobile-phone-factory-zambia-no-image-made-artificial
239 No, Senegal's new president Faye hasn't told France to 'leave Senegal alone' – old altered video of politician Sonko
     https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/no-senegals-new-president-faye-hasnt-told-france-leave
240 Disinformation in the 2024 National and Provincial Elections in South Africa
     https://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/240531-MMA-Real411-interim-elections-report-AS_edits-clean.pdf
241 Umati: Monitoring online dangerous speech https://dangerousspeech.org/umati-monitoring-online-dangerous-speech/
242 Neil Ford, AI offers hope against political disinformation, https://africainfact.com/ai-offers-hope-against-political-disinformation/

4.2.2 Inadequate Content Moderation Systems

Across the study countries, AI-based content moderation systems were found to be widely ineffective due to their lack of contextual understanding, inconsistent enforcement, and regulatory gaps, particularly for local languages and complex political content. The AI-based content moderation systems used by social media platforms are largely developed for the Global North and struggle to handle low-resource African languages. According to a 2022 report, a vast majority of African languages are not supported on key platforms, forcing more than 90% of Africans to switch to a second (mostly European-colonial language or dominant language in their region) to use the platform.[243]

This gap has had tragic real-world consequences, such as in Ethiopia during the Tigray War, where platforms failed to detect genocidal content in local languages, leading to its amplification, partly due to a critical shortage of Tigrinya and Amharic-speaking content moderators at Facebook's Nairobi hub.[244] Similarly, in Tunisia, social media companies (Meta, X and TikTok) struggle to effectively moderate their platforms, especially for hateful content in Arabic dialects.

This problem is compounded by the exploitation of African data workers and content moderators in cities like Nairobi (Kenya), Gulu (Uganda) and Accra (Ghana), earning less than USD 1.50 per hour, who are exposed to traumatic content for a fraction of Western wages to train AI models.[245] The proliferation of AI-generated content also risks drowning out human voices and making platforms feel less authentic. Moderation practices also impact the dissemination of information by journalists, activists, and civil society organisations. In Kenya, automated content moderation systems resulted in disproportionate takedowns of legitimate political content, satire, and activism.[246]

Overall, the current AI-based content moderation systems are problematic across Africa, as the lack of contextual understanding has been cited as leading to inconsistent enforcement and the disproportionate flagging or removal of legitimate political content, satire, and dissent, particularly in political environments.

243 *State of the Internet's Languages, Summary Report 2022, https://internetlanguages.org/media/pdf-summary/EN-STIL-SummaryReport.pdf*
244 *AI surveillance and data colonialism shape African conflicts https://africainfact.com/ai-surveillance-and-data-colonialism-shape-african-conflicts/*
245 *AI surveillance and data colonialism shape African conflicts https://africainfact.com/ai-surveillance-and-data-colonialism-shape-african-conflicts/*
246 *Content Moderation and Local Stakeholders in Kenya https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Kenya-country-report.pdf*

4.2.3 Escalating Surveillance

AI-powered surveillance systems, including facial recognition CCTV, mobile-phone spyware, and advanced biometric ID systems, are being extensively deployed by state and private actors. This is leading to widespread privacy violations, the tracking and profiling of citizens (especially activists, journalists, and minority communities), and the chilling of free expression and assembly. The absence of strong legal safeguards and judicial oversight means these technologies are often deployed opaquely and with little accountability.

In Rwanda, Pegasus spyware has been used to target journalists and dissidents. In Kenya, Worldcoin's mass biometric data collection was ruled illegal by the High Court for violating the country's Data Protection Act by failing to obtain proper consent and conduct a Data Protection Impact Assessment.[247]

In Uganda, the government is reported to be planning to use AI-powered tools to regulate social media for monitoring harmful content, ahead of the 2026 elections.[248] Across Africa, the adoption of "smart city" surveillance systems has expanded, with countries like Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia using them.[249] There are concerns regarding the hidden cost of Chinese-funded projects, which are already being used for political ends to surveil dissenters, track political opponents, and suppress protests.

Another concern is "data colonialism" or "surveillance colonialism," where foreign powers provide technology in exchange for citizen data. For example, in 2021, Zimbabwe signed a deal with Chinese firms - CloudWalk Technologies and Hikvision, to hand over biometric data to train facial recognition systems,[250] which has been linked to a "chilling effect" on dissent, with citizens self-censoring due to fears of being monitored.

Recent research highlights that state surveillance in Zimbabwe and Uganda has had a significant chilling effect, resulting in self-censorship, directly restricting their own expression; an unwillingness to engage with individuals or organisations believed to be subject to surveillance; and the erosion of trust, affecting individuals' ability to form and maintain relationships, build networks and organise politically.[251]

The expansion of AI-powered surveillance (such as facial recognition CCTV, biometric ID systems and device spyware) by state and private actors is notable in Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, among others. These systems are often implemented without adequate legal safeguards, public consultation, or transparent data practices, and lead to pervasive tracking, profiling, and risk abuse of personal data, thereby creating a chilling effect on freedom of expression and assembly.

247   Worldcoin Stumbles in Kenya After Court Orders Data Deletion https://medium.com/@FromLagosto/worldcoin-stumbles-in-kenya-after-court-orders-data-deletion-96d5407c1066
248   The Delicate Dance Between Uganda's Civil Society and Technology Ahead of the 2026 Elections' (Femme Forte Uganda, 29 April 2025)
      https://www.femmeforteug.org/the-delicate-dance-with-ugandas-civil-society-and-technology-in-the-run-up-to-the-2026-elections
249   China's Smart Cities in Africa: Should the United States Be Concerned? https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-smart-cities-africa-should-united-states-be-concerned
250   CloudWalk facial recognition deployed in Zimbabwe https://www.securityvision.io/wiki/index.php/CloudWalk_facial_recognition_deployed_in_Zimbabwe
251   Journal of Human Rights Practice, The Chilling Effects of Surveillance and Human Rights: Insights from Qualitative Research in Uganda and Zimbabwe, 31 July 2023,
      https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/huad020

4.2.4 Algorithmic Bias and Digital Exclusion

The ethical issues stemming from AI deployment are broadly similar across the continent and directly impact civic space, digital rights, and inclusion. Institutionalised algorithmic bias and discrimination were noted, with AI systems being trained on non-representative and foreign datasets. These often perpetuate existing societal inequalities, leading to discriminatory outcomes in access to services (such as credit, social protection, healthcare) and information, particularly for marginalised groups, ethnic minorities, women, rural populations, based on their gender, ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status. A consistent and critical risk is the prevalence of algorithmic bias, largely stemming from AI systems trained on non-representative, foreign datasets that do not reflect Africa's linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity.

Research also found under-representation of many African countries in health research, and that local African researchers were often underrepresented as lead authors in collaborations with Western-based researchers who have the financial resources to fund research, which increases the risk of embedding and amplifying these biases in algorithms. [252]

The limited accountability and transparency of companies developing AI systems and the opaque nature of AI systems are other challenges. Whereas most platforms implement automated decision-making and content moderation, they refuse public scrutiny and limit available redress for harms, which can undermine democratic accountability. Further, the absence of robust legal frameworks means companies cannot be compelled to address risks from their systems.

Lastly, the widening digital divide across countries, evidenced by the poor infrastructure, low digital literacy rates, and lack of local language support in AI tools, deepens inequalities. Also, data workers and content moderators who train AI systems continue to work in precarious conditions and for exploitative wages. The inequalities are more pronounced for marginalised and vulnerable populations who are hindered from accessing the benefits of AI and participation in governance discussions. Such factors can lead to discriminatory outcomes in access to essential services (e.g., social protection, finance, healthcare) and information, disproportionately affecting marginalised populations such as women, rural communities, ethnic minorities, and linguistic groups. These biases exacerbate existing inequalities and create new forms of digital exclusion.

There are concerns regarding the hidden cost of Chinese-funded projects, which are already being used for political ends to surveil dissenters, track political opponents, and suppress protests.

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252 *AI bias in sexual and reproductive health: an African human rights perspective https://powerlaw.africa/2025/01/31/brief-ai-bias-in-sexual-and-reproductive-health-africa/*

4.2.5 Other Challenges

Across these 14 countries, the most persistent AI challenges are low digital and AI skills, limited compute and data infrastructure, uneven or incomplete regulatory frameworks, and constrained public investment, all of which slow responsible adoption and oversight despite growing policy ambition at continental and national levels. AI and digital literacy skills are concentrated in a handful of countries such as Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Tunisia, while in other countries, they are insufficient across key stakeholder groups, such as regulators, civil society, media and academia, and could constrain AI development and governance. Even where capacities exist, they are adversely impact by AI brain drain, and thus such gaps could limit innovation and create dependencies on external AI experts and vendors.

Another challenge is that Africa still has a small share of global data centres and accounts for only 1% of global compute capacity, making it hard to train, fine-tune, or evaluate models locally and cheaply.[253] Also, investment in data centres, regional compute hubs, and cross-border digital infrastructure to enable local AI model development is still low, given the high capital requirements to install such capacity within the continent.[254] Also, while investments in digital infrastructure and opportunities for technological leapfrogging are increasing, the digital divide in Africa remains a significant challenge, with only 25% of Sub-Saharan Africa's population using the internet, driven by factors such as poor digital infrastructure, high connectivity prices, limited bandwidth, affordability of devices, and large urban-rural gaps.[255]

Lastly, and as shown in sections below, none of the countries reviewed has a dedicated, comprehensive AI legislation yet. Most countries rely mainly on a fragmented set of data protection laws and other sector laws, such as ICT, copyright, consumer protection, and cybersecurity, which are neither AI-ready nor harmonised across the continent, to regulate AI. In addition, they are enforced by relatively new, ill-equipped, under-resourced and uncoordinated regulatory institutions, resulting in a regulatory lacuna that compounds the risk of inconsistent oversight, non-compliance, rights abuses through high-risk uses, and limited access to effective remedies for affected communities.

253   AI and Africa: The unexplored frontier of innovation and inclusivity https://t20southafrica.org/commentaries/ai-and-africa-the-unexplored-frontier-of-innovation-and-inclusivity/;

254   Africa Declares AI a Strategic Priority as High-Level Dialogue Calls for Investment, Inclusion, and Innovation https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20250517/africa-declares-ai-strategic-prio impactedrity-investment-inclusion-and-innovation

255   Unlocking digital connectivity in Africa https://www.eib.org/files/publications/unlocking_digital_connectivity_in_africa_en.pdf; The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2025, Overview Report, GSMA, https://www.gsma.com/somic/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/The-State-of-Mobile-Internet-Connectivity-2025-Overview-Report.pdf

4.3 State of AI Regulation in Africa

This section reviews the progress and developments in AI regulation across the countries under review. It highlights the current regulatory frameworks, how existing laws are being applied in the AI ecosystem, the emerging gaps and developing initiatives.

Africa's regional AI governance is anchored by several instruments. These include the AU Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2024),[256] the AU Data Policy Framework (2022),[257] the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030),[258] the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention),[259] and Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade (2024).[260] These instruments provide the continent-wide vision, enabling data and digital foundations, and legal safeguards for responsible, inclusive AI development and use. Other complementary regional initiatives include the African Digital Compact,[261] Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa (2019),[262] Smart Africa's Blueprint for Artificial Intelligence for Africa.[264]

In 2021, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted Resolution 473 (2021) urging for a study on AI, robotics, and human rights and in March 2025, adopted Resolution 630/2025 calling for the development of guidelines to assist States in monitoring technology companies in respect of their duty to maintain information integrity through independent fact-checking.[265] In 2025, the AU Peace and Security Council called on the AU Commission to elaborate a Common African Position on AI and develop an African Charter on AI.[266]

These initiatives and instruments provide a foundational infrastructure for effective AI governance across the continent, while emphasising a rights-based, ethical and responsible use of AI. However, their benefits will only be realised if AU Member states can ratify the instruments and harmonise and align national legislation, policies and strategies, and once developed, invest in their implementation to harness the power of AI to solve the continent's challenge

256   AU Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2024) https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44004-doc-EN-_Continental_AI_Strategy_July_2024.pdf

257   AU Data Policy Framework (2022) https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42078-doc-DATA-POLICY-FRAMEWORKS-2024-ENG-V2.pdf

258   Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030) https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-dts-english.pdf

259   African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection, https://au.int/en/treaties/african-union-convention-cyber-security-and-personal-data-protection

260   Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade https://au.int/en/treaties/protocol-agreement-establishing-african-continental-free-trade-area-digital-trade

261   African Digital Compact, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44005-doc-AU_Digital_Compact_V4.pdf

262   Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa (2019) https://achpr.au.int/en/node/902

263   Blueprint for Artificial Intelligence for Africa https://www.bmz-digital.global/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/70029-eng_ai-for-africa-blueprint.pdf

264   Resolution on the need to undertake a Study on human and peoples' rights and artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and other new and emerging technologies in Africa - ACHPR/Res. 473 (EXT.OS/ XXXI) 2021
      https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/473-resolution-need-undertake-study-human-and-peoples-rights-and-art

265   Resolution on developing Guidelines to assist States monitor technology companies in respect of their duty to maintain information integrity through independent fact checking - ACHPR/Res.630 (LXXXII)
      2025, https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/achprres630-lxxxii-2025

266   Communique of the 1267th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 20 March 2025, on Artificial Intelligence and its Impact on Peace, Security and Governance in Africa
      https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-1267th-meeting-of-the-peace-and-security-council-held-on-20-march-2025-on-artificial-intelligence-and-its-impact-on-peace-security-and-governan

4.3.1 Current AI Regulatory and Governance Frameworks

The overall trend shows an evolving landscape where many African countries are actively in the early to mid-stages of developing AI regulatory and governance frameworks. As shown in Table 4 below, the leading countries have developed guidelines, AI policies and strategies, data protection laws, and applied sector legislation to AI governance. In contrast, the lagging countries generally lack this foundational framework, creating a vacuum which could heighten AI-driven risks in the absence of effective oversight.

Rwanda was among the first countries to adopt a national AI policy in 2023. A significant number of countries, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Tunisia, have either launched national AI strategies or are actively developing foundational policy frameworks in the past two years. Also, professional bodies such as Nigeria's legal sector,[267] South Africa's media[268] and Kenya's media sector[269] and AI community[270] have developed relevant guidelines for their members. Despite this momentum of rapid policy development, none of the countries has a comprehensive, AI-specific legislation in place, leading to a reliance on existing and fragmented legal frameworks to regulate or address complex AI risks.

Table 4: *AI Frameworks and Status Across 14 Countries*

Country	AI Guidelines	AI Policies	AI Strategies	AI Laws	Relevant Sector Laws Applied to AI
Cameroon	None	AI Policy	2040 AI Roadmap, National AI strategy	None	Law No. 2024/017 of 23 December 2024 relating to personal data protection in Cameroon, Law No. 2010/012 on Cybersecurity and Cybercriminality, Law No. 2010/013 on Electronic Communications,
Egypt	Egyptian Charter for Responsible AI	None	National AI Strategy (first edition), National AI Strategy (second edition, 2025-2030)	AI law (Planned)	Personal Data Protection Law (Law No. 151 of 2020) Bylaw and centre pending, Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law No. 175/2018), Anti-terrorism law No. (94) 2015
Ethiopia	None	National AI Policy (2024)	Digital Ethiopia 2025/2030 strategies	None	Ethiopian Constitution, Ethiopian Civil Code, Criminal Code, Personal Data Protection Proclamation (No. 1321/2024), Computer Crime Proclamation (2016), Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation (No. 1185/2020), Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation No. 590/2008

267   *Guidelines For The Use Of Artificial Intelligence In The Legal Profession In Nigeria*
      https://nbaslp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Guidelines-for-the-Use-of-Artificial-Intelligence-in-the-Nigerian-Legal-Profession.pdf
268   *Guidance note on Artificial Intelligence https://presscouncil.org.za/2023/11/28/press-council-of-sa-pcsa-guidance-notes/*
269   *Media Guide On The Use Of Artificial Intelligence In Kenya*
      https://mediacouncil.or.ke/sites/default/files/downloads/MEDIA%20GUIDE%20ON%20THE%20USE%20OF%20ARTIFICIAL%20INTELLIGENCE%20IN%20KENYA.pdf
270   *Artificial Intelligence Practitioners' Guide: Kenya https://www.bmz-digital.global/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/GIZ-2023-Artificial-Intelligence-Practicioners-Guide-Kenya.pdf*

Country					
Ghana	None	None	National AI Strategy (2023-2033) (Shelved), New AI Strategy (in development)	None	Constitution, 1992, Data Protection Act 2012 (Act 843), Cybersecurity Act 2020 (Act 1038), Electronic Communications Act, 2008, Right to Information Act (2019)
Kenya	Media Guide on the Use of Artificial Intelligence, Voluntary standards (KS 3007:2025 and KS ISO/IEC 8183:2023), AI Statement of Principles	National ICT Policy (2020), AI Policy (in development)	National AI Strategy (2025-2030), Kenya National Digital Master Plan (2022–2032) and Digital Economy Blueprint	None	Constitution of Kenya 2010, Data Protection Act (DPA), 2019, Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act (CMCA), 2018, Data Protection (General) Regulations, 2021
Mozambique	None	Information Society Policy and Strategic Plan (Resolution No. 52/2019), Cybersecurity Policy (Resolution No. 69/2021), Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (Resolution No. 39/2024)	None	None	Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (2004 amended), Decree No. 59/2023
Namibia	AI ethics roadmap	AI Policy Framework (proposed), National ICT Policy (2016)	National AI Strategy (in development), Digital Namibia Strategy (2021)	None	Electronic Transaction Act 4 of 2019, Virtual Assets Act 10 of 2023, Draft Data Protection Bill, Draft Cybercrime Bill
Nigeria	Guidelines for the use of Artificial Intelligence In the Legal Profession In Nigeria	None	National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (NAIS) (2024), National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020-2030), NITDA Strategic Roadmap (2021-2024) & Roadmap 2.0 (2024-2027)	None	Nigeria Data Protection Act (2023), Cybercrimes Act (2015), Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) (2019), Copyright Act, Patent and Designs Act, Trademarks Act, Nigeria Startup Act (2022), Consumers Protection Act
Tunisia	None	None	National AI Strategy (in development), Industrial and Innovation Strategy Horizon 2035, Higher education strategy for integrating AI	None	Tunisian Constitution of 2022, Organic Law n° 2004-63 of 27 July 2004 on personal data protection, Law No. 94-36 of February 24, 1994 on Literary and Artistic Property, Decree-loi n° 2022-54 du 13 septembre 2022, Telecommunication code, data protection law (proposed)
Senegal	None	None	National AI Strategy (2023–2028)	None	Law No. 2008-12 on the Protection of Personal Data (CDP), Laws on cybercrime (Law No. 2008-11), Electronic transactions (Law No. 2008-08), Framework law on information society (Law No. 2008-10)

South Africa	Guidance Note on Artificial Intelligence (Press Council)	AI Policy Framework and National Policy on Data and Cloud	National AI Strategy (in development)	None	Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), Copyright Act, Patents Act, Consumer Protection Act, Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, Competition Act, Cybercrimes Act, and Film and Publications Board regulations
Rwanda	Guidelines on Ethical Development and Implementation of AI	National AI Policy (2023); National Data Sharing Policy, Regulations (Planned)	AI Strategy (in development)	None	Law on Data Protection and Privacy (2021), National Data Sharing Policy 2025
Uganda	AI Ethical Guidelines (in development)	National Policy on AI (in development)	National AI Strategy (in development)	None	Data Protection and Privacy Act, Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, National Payment Systems Act, National Information Technology Authority, Uganda (NITA-U), Uganda Communications Act, Regulation of Interception of Communications Act (RICA), Computer Misuse Act
Zimbabwe	None	National AI Policy Framework (in development)	AI strategy (in development)	None	National ICT Policy (2022–2027), Smart Zimbabwe 2030 Master Plan, Cyber and Data Protection Act (2021)

Data protection laws across the study countries are becoming a critical first line of defence against AI-related harms. For example, in Kenya, following the mass biometric collection case again Worldcoin (a company founded by Open AI CEO, Sam Altman), the Data Protection Act provided a basis for intervention at the High Court, which found in May 2025, that their operations were illegal for failing to obtain consent or conduct a data protection impact assessment, thus setting a useful precedent for digital rights.[271] However, some countries are still lagging behind in enacting and enforcing data protection laws.

A number of the national AI policies and strategies articulate ethical principles such as human-centred, ethical, inclusive, and trustworthy AI development and use. They also aim to align with international and regional instruments such as the AU Continental AI Strategy, AU Data Policy Framework, African Commission's Resolution 630/2025 on developing Guidelines to assist States monitor technology companies in respect of their duty to maintain information integrity, UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, and the OECD's "Trustworthy AI" principles. However, the success of these frameworks hinges on whether African countries can translate the high-level principles into enforceable laws that protect citizens' digital rights and civic liberties. Kenya became the first African country to join the International Network of AI Safety Institutes.[272]

271 *Kenyan High Court delivers landmark biometric data ruling https://iclg.com/news/22583-kenyan-high-court-delivers-landmark-biometric-data-ruling*
272 *Kenya Joins Inaugural International AI Safety Network in San Francisco https://www.odrimedia.co.ke/kenya-joins-inaugural-international-ai-safety-network-in-san-francisco/*

As highlighted above, a common challenge is the lack of specific AI legislation. Most existing frameworks are "soft law" instruments (policies, strategies, or guidelines) that lack binding statutory force, clear timelines, or dedicated enforcement mechanisms. While human rights principles are increasingly mentioned in these strategies, they are largely aspirational as their concrete incorporation and enforcement remain weak or inconsistent, with civic space and digital rights often secondary to economic and innovation narratives.

4.3.2 Application of Existing Laws and Policies to AI

The prevailing trend is a reliance on existing laws, particularly data protection and privacy laws (e.g., POPIA in South Africa, DPAs in Kenya, Ghana, and Uganda, and the Cyber and Data Protection Act in Zimbabwe), cybercrime, copyright, and consumer protection to govern aspects of AI systems. These laws often contain provisions relevant to automated decision-making, consent, and data ownership. However, they are in essence a stopgap measure as they only offer a partial or foundational layer of protection, but are still useful as a starting point for managing AI-related risks. Given the pace and complexity of AI, these laws are still insufficient or too general to address the unique complexities and risks posed by AI, such as algorithmic bias, explainability, liability for autonomous systems, AI-generated content and generative AI. Moreover, enforcement of such laws in the context of AI will be difficult or could create regulatory uncertainty, given the dynamic context and the operational challenges that regulatory bodies such as the newly formed data protection authorities face.

4.3.3 Key Gaps In The Current AI Governance Frameworks

A critical and pervasive gap across almost all countries is the absence of comprehensive, AI-specific legislation that clearly defines AI, mandates algorithmic impact assessments, establishes clear accountability mechanisms, independent oversight, mandatory impact assessments for high-risk AI systems, and provides specific redress for AI-driven harms. Other common gaps include the lack of explicit guidelines for public-sector AI deployment, inadequate provisions for algorithmic transparency and explainability, measures to address algorithmic bias, weak data sovereignty mechanisms, and limited enforcement capacity of regulatory bodies.

Also, in policy-making, the multistakeholder consultation processes are often lacking or not sufficiently inclusive, leading to frameworks that may not reflect broad-based civic concerns. Moreover, many proposed institutional bodies (e.g., National AI Institutes, AI Ethics Boards, and Responsible AI Offices) are either nascent, not yet operational, or lack sufficient mandate and resources for effective oversight. This regulatory vacuum exposes citizens to unregulated AI technologies and rights violations.

lack of explicit guidelines for public-sector AI deployment

4.3.4 Main Challenges Hindering Effective, Inclusive, Rights-Respecting and Responsible Governance Of AI

Across the study countries, there were common challenges identified in implementing effective AI governance.

At the policy level, the main challenge is the lack of a specific legislative framework for AI across the study countries, addressing algorithmic accountability, ethical standards, and accessible grievance mechanisms. Provisions in sectoral laws, such as on data protection, cybersecurity, copyright, elections, and consumer protection, for example, are fragmented, too general and do not address AI-specific concerns, including those relating to civic space and digital democracy. They are also not well-enforced to tackle AI challenges, such as deepfakes, synthetic media, or AI-enabled information manipulation.

At the institutional level, there are fragmented regulatory environments with overlapping responsibilities among institutions and a lack of dedicated, empowered AI governance bodies. Countries are rushing to establish new AI institutions without clarification of roles and their relationships with existing institutions, such as in Nigeria (NITDA, NDPC, and NCAIR) and South Africa (DCDT, DSI and Presidency). Oversight agencies are often under-resourced, under-staffed, lack the capacity and technical expertise to audit complex AI systems and have limited financial resources to discharge their mandates. Some of the proposed institutions, such as Egypt's Responsible AI Centre, are yet to be established. There is also over-reliance on tech platforms, leading to unmitigated risks when concerns remain unaddressed.

At the technical level, the study examines the key challenges, including the persistent digital divide (e.g. due to high cost of devices, internet access, electricity, etc), and low AI and digital literacy and skills among policymakers, regulators, and the general public. Also, there are significant skills gaps in AI development and governance expertise. Further, there is limited local research and development (R&D) funding and heavy reliance on foreign AI technologies, risking technological dependency and digital colonialism.

At the political level, a lack of sustained political will to enact robust and binding AI laws that might constrain powerful state or corporate interests was noted. There can also be dissonance between policy discussions and tangible outcomes, constrained by the limited involvement of marginalised communities, bureaucratic processes and regulatory and political inertia, where reforms are discussed but not legislated, sometimes due to commercial interests at play. Also, opaqueness in AI procurement and deployment decisions, often without public engagement or human rights impact assessments, was noted. Moreover, misaligned priorities where economic growth and innovation are prioritised over human rights safeguards were dominant. In addition, there is limited multistakeholder engagement, with policy processes being largely state-led, non-inclusive and conducted through top-down approaches, for example, in Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The widening digital divide across countries, evidenced by the poor infrastructure, low digital literacy rates, and lack of local language support in AI tools, deepens inequalities. Also, data workers and content moderators who train AI systems continue to work in precarious conditions and for exploitative wages. The inequalities are more pronounced for marginalised and vulnerable populations who are hindered from accessing the benefits of AI and participation in governance discussions.

4.3.5 Ongoing or Planned Initiatives by Key Stakeholders

There is a clear trend towards increased activity, with most countries being engaged in policy development, often focused on forming technical bodies, developing strategies, and aligning with international norms, as seen in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, and Tunisia.

In Cameroon, MINPOSTEL has set up a technical committee to explore options for AI regulation and a National AI Ethics Board, together with the development of sector-specific guidelines, is recommended. There have also been Parliamentary hearings on AI's societal impact, while a coalition of digital rights groups has proposed a "Citizens' Charter for Ethical AI".

In Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute (EAII) has been established, and there are ongoing consultations and plans to ensure the national strategy is aligned with the AU Continental AI Strategy.[273] In Namibia, efforts to create a National AI Institute are underway, with the establishment of technical working groups within the National AI Council in progress.[274] In Mozambique, a multidisciplinary commission to regulate AI was announced in May 2025 to regulate AI.[275] The National Institute of Information and Communication Technologies (INTIC) assessed Mozambique's AI readiness and recommended the development of a legal and regulatory framework and a National AI Strategy.[276]

273   Shahid Sulaiman, Davin Olën and Monique Bezuidenhout, 'AI regulation and policy in Africa', Dentons, 13 June 2024,
      https://www.dentons.com/en/insights/articles/2024/june/13/ai-regulation-and-policy-in-africa
274   Lamech Amugongo, AI is more than a readiness assessment report, https://thebrief.com.na/2025/08/ai-is-more-than-a-readiness-assessment-report/
275   Forbes Africa, Governo moçambicano pretende criar comissão para regular inteligência artificial no país
      https://forbesafricalusofona.com/governo-mocambicano-pretende-criar-comissao-para-regular-inteligencia-artificial-no-pais/,
276   INTIC (2025). Inteligência Artificial em Moçambique: Onde estamos e para onde vamos,
      https://intic.gov.mz/inteligencia-artificial-em-mocambique-onde-estamos-e-para-onde-vamos/

In Ghana, the Ministry of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovation is actively working towards the adoption of its National AI Strategy, which has been developed with support from various development partners.[277] A Responsible AI Office was proposed in the previous strategy, though it is yet to be established. However, stakeholder consultations were held in April 2025 on the new strategy, and the country participated in UNESCO's Ethical AI Readiness Assessment process.[278]

In Kenya, the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Digital Economy is leading the development of an AI Policy, a data governance policy, a Digital Public Infrastructure Policy, a Cloud Policy and a Broadband Strategy and several technical working groups and stakeholder forums have been conducted in 2025.[279] In South Africa, the SAHRC and Gender Commission are adapting mandates to monitor AI-related harms. Also, institutions like the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) plan to oversee ethical standards in AI-driven services and content.[280]

In Senegal, the government is implementing various measures, including collaborations with tech giants, to ensure effective, participatory, and human rights-centred AI governance. In Egypt, the establishment of a Responsible AI Centre is planned as part of the AI strategy.[281] In Uganda, the process of developing a National Policy on AI has been initiated, and a National AI Task Force was formed in 2024, involving government experts and other stakeholders.[282] In Zimbabwe, the government announced in July 2025 that it was developing a national AI Strategy with support from UNESCO, and stakeholder consultations would begin from August 2025.[283] In Tunisia, the government's establishment of multistakeholder initiatives such as task forces and consultations has signalled a commitment to fostering inclusive dialogue around AI governance.

Many initiatives involve multistakeholder consultations, though their inclusivity and influence vary. International partnerships (such as with UNESCO, Smart Africa, and GIZ) are crucial in supporting these developments. Parliamentary committees are beginning to debate AI legislation in some countries, such as Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, and Tunisia. Civil society organisations are active in advocacy and awareness campaigns, often filling gaps where government action is slow. However, most of the initiatives remain "aspirational" without clear legislative translation or enforcement mechanisms.

277 Emmanuel Quaicoe and Gifty Hukpati, "Judiciary contributes to National AI Strategy at key consultation forum", Joy Online, 30 April 2025, https://www.myjoyonline.com/judiciary-contributes-to-national-ai-strategy-at-key-consultation-forum/; Adom FM, "Ghana's National Ai Strategy and digital transformation's blue print - Sam George"' 1 August 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKV-9I5-aO4

278 Fredrick Ogenga & Aaron Stanley, Regulating Artificial Intelligence in Africa: Strategies and Insights from Kenya, Ghana, and the African Union (Wilson Center Africa Program, 18 September 2024) https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/regulating-artificial-intelligence-africa-strategies-and-insights-kenya-ghana-and-0

279 National Data Governance Policy Formulation kicks off https://ict.go.ke/national-data-governance-policy-formulation-kicks; Government Reaffirms its Commitment to building an Inclusive and Trusted Digital Public Infrastructure https://ict.go.ke/government-reaffirms-its-commitment-building-inclusive-and-trusted-digital-public-infrastructure; Kenya Cloud Policy https://www.ict.go.ke/sites/default/files/2024-12/Kenya%20Cloud%20Policy%20-%202024.pdf

280 The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). "ICASA Strategic Plan 2025-30." https://www.icasa.org.za/uploads/files/ICASA-Strategic-Plan-2020-2025.pdf.

281 National Council for AI , AI strategy (first edition), https://ai.gov.eg/EgyptNationalAIStrategy(6-4-2021)4.pdf

282 Javira Ssebwami, UCC establishes AI task force to develop framework for adoption and utilization, PML Daily, July 26, 2024, https://pmldaily.com/business/tech/2024/07/ucc-establishes-ai-task-force-to-develop-framework-for-adoption-and-utilization.html

283 "UNESCO Backs Zimbabwe's Development of National Artificial Intelligence Strategy," TechAfrica News, 25 July 2025, https://techafricanews.com/2025/07/25/unesco-backs-zimbabwes-development-of-national-artificial-intelligence-strategy/; Ministry of ICT, Postal & Courier Services Zimbabwe, "UNESCO Pledges Support for Zimbabwe's National AI Strategy Development," X (formerly Twitter), 2025, accessed: 30 July 2025, https://x.com/MICTPCS_ZW/status/1948366602539319671

4.4 Towards Human Rights-Centred AI Governance in Africa?

Ensuring that AI development and deployment in Africa are human-rights-centred requires a deliberate, multi-stakeholder approach that moves beyond high-level principles to practical, context-specific action. The situation in the study countries reveals a landscape where human rights-centred AI governance is still aspirational due to gaps in implementation, capacity, and stakeholder engagement in policy development and implementation.

4.4.1 Multistakeholder Mechanisms on AI Governance

While the importance of multistakeholder dialogue is widely recognised and frequently recommended, formal and sustained mechanisms for inclusive participation remain largely underdeveloped or ad hoc in most countries. The most progress is seen in countries like South Africa, Kenya, Senegal, and Nigeria, where there is more structured multistakeholder engagement. In these countries, governments are moving from top-down approaches to actively involving and co-creating policies in collaboration with civil society, academia, and the private sector from the ground up. These countries have initiated task forces, national commissions, or expert groups to develop AI policy documents and strategies.

Some countries, such as Nigeria, have established more structured bodies, including the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR), consortia like the Nigeria AI Collective were formed after stakeholder workshops by the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy on the National AI Strategy, which involved government, civil society, academia, diaspora, and the private sector.[284] Kenya established a National AI Working Group and Steering Committee to develop its National AI Strategy, which, through the support of various development partners, held various forums to engage with diverse stakeholders.[285] Senegal has adopted a multi-stakeholder approach led by the Ministry of Digital Affairs, involving other ministries, private actors, technical and financial partners, and civil society.

In South Africa, the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), while developing the National AI Policy Framework in 2024, adopted a participatory policymaking process where stakeholders submitted feedback on email.[286] However, institutions such as the National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) face challenges such as institutional inertia, a lack of technical expertise and minimal follow-through on commitments. There is also concern over the limited involvement of marginalised and rural communities in AI policy development processes. Ghana participated in UNESCO's Ethical AI Readiness Assessment (ETH-RAM) in October 2024.[287] Despite having its AI Strategy (2023-2033),[288] it held new stakeholder consultations in April 2025 for the revised AI Strategy, although consultations with civil society remained limited and multistakeholder engagement is yet to be institutionalised.[289]

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284 FMCIDE, Ministry's Artificial Intelligence Strategy Workshop to Attract 120 Experts from Across the World, https://fmcide.gov.ng/ministrys-artificial-intelligence-strategy-workshop-to-attract-120-experts-from-across-the-world/; Luminate, Partnerships will ensure inclusivity for Nigeria's AI strategy, https://www.luminategroup.com/posts/news/partnerships-nigeria-ai-strategy; CJID Communications. (2025). CJID, Nigeria AI Collective Expands AI Integration Training for Educators to Southern Institutions, Deepens Push for Media Curriculum Reform, https://thecjid.org/cjid-nigeria-ai-collective-expands-ai-integration-training-for-educators-to-southern-institutions-deepens-push-for-media-curriculum-reform/

285 Kenya Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2025-2030, https://ict.go.ke/sites/default/files/2025-03/Kenya%20AI%20Strategy%202025%20-%202030.pdf

286 Michalsons. "Help Develop South Africa's AI Policy Framework." Michalsons, October 2024. https://www.michalsons.com/blog/help-develop-south-africas-ai-policy-framework/75445.

287 Readiness Assessment Measurement (RAM)- Ethical use of Artificial Intelligence Launched https://moc.gov.gh/2024/10/01/readiness-assessment-measurement-ram-ethical-use-of-artificial-intelligence-launched/

288 Republic of Ghana National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2023 - 2033, https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/ghana-s-national-artificial-intelligence-strategy-2023-2033-pdf/270928634%22

289 Emmanuel Quaicoe and Gifty Hukpati, "Ghana advances National AI Strategy with second consultation at KNUST", Joy Online, 23 April 2025, https://www.myjoyonline.com/ghana-advances-national-ai-strategy-with-second-consultation-at-knust/; Emmanuel Quaicoe and Gifty Hukpati, "Judiciary contributes to National AI Strategy at key consultation forum", Joy Online, 30 April 2025, https://www.myjoyonline.com/judiciary-contributes-to-national-ai-strategy-at-key-consultation-forum/.

In Namibia, UNESCO-led multistakeholder forums have been instrumental in the AI policy process, resulting in diverse stakeholders co-developing an AI ethics roadmap,[290] and the Windhoek Statement on Artificial Intelligence in Southern Africa (2022) calls for the implementation of multistakeholder approaches in AI governance.[291] In Ethiopia, university-led workshops and inclusion of experts in policy discussions is a promising step, although multistakeholder engagement is yet to be institutionalised. In Zimbabwe, the AI policy process was largely state-dominated and was not inclusive, transparent or participatory.[292] Also, the Postal & Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) has not convened stakeholder forums, which risks reinforcing exclusion of marginalised groups from the policy processes.[293]

In Cameroon, despite hosting the National Digital Economy Forum since 2022, multistakeholder engagement in AI governance is still developing, not inclusive, and informal. Other promising forums such as Douala's Tech Innovation Council, the Silicon Mountain, and UNDP-supported "AI for Development" are not linked to the formal national policy processes.[294] Furthermore, processes such as the Internet Governance Forums at the national and regional levels provide platforms for discussion and debate, though participation of governments is not always robust.

Nonetheless, multistakeholder approaches underscore the principle that the process is equally as important as the planned outcomes. Open, inclusive and consultative processes can ensure that AI policies, regulations and strategies are designed to address local needs and protect fundamental rights. However, challenges exist with ensuring genuine inclusivity, especially for marginalised groups, and achieving tangible stakeholder influence on policy and legislation. Notably, some of the mechanisms have been described as episodic, project-based, or dependent on donor funding and lacking long-term institutional anchoring.

290 UNESO, Namibia Sets Roadmap to Develop AI Responsibly and Ethically, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/namibia-sets-roadmap-develop-ai-responsibly-and-ethically
291 Windhoek Statement on Artificial Intelligence in Southern Africa, Windhoek (Namibia), 9 September 2022 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383197
292 National AI policy framework completed," The Herald (Zimbabwe), 14 October 2024, https://www.herald.co.zw/national-ai-policy-framework-completed/.
293 Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Zimbabwe, "Cybersecurity and Data Protection Bill entrenches surveillance: MISA Zimbabwe analysis," MISA Zimbabwe, 19 May 2020, https://zimbabwe.misa.org/2020/05/19/cybersecurity-and-data-protection-bill-entrenches-surveillance-an-analysis/.
294 UNDP Cameroon, How Can Generative AI Contribute to Improving Quality Education and Research Impact Development in Cameroon? 2024. https://www.undp.org/cameroon/blog/how-can-generative-ai-contribute-improving-quality-education-and-research-impact-development-cameroon

4.4.2 Engagement of Local and International Stakeholders in Shaping AI Norms

Across the countries with ongoing processes, there was significant involvement of International stakeholders such as UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the African Union (AU), and development partners such as World Bank, OECD, UK Government, European Union (EU) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), who provide technical assistance, funding, and significantly influence the adoption of global AI norms and principles. Notably, in November 2021, all Member States of UNESCO adopted the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, which incorporates human rights standards and multistakeholder governance.[295] Nigeria, Rwanda, and Kenya signed the Bletchley Declaration on AI Safety in November 2023, which obliges them to develop AI that mitigates risk.[296]

The Egyptian Charter for Responsible AI, developed in 2023, draws upon guidelines from OECD, UNESCO, WHO, IEEE, EU, Singapore, UK, US and Australia.[297] The German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the EU, through the Digital Transformation Centre, Kenya, implemented by the GIZ, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) supported the development of Kenya's AI Strategy.[298] In Cameroon, development partners like GIZ and AFD have supported policy processes but have been criticised for advancing priorities that do not align with local needs. In Zimbabwe, regional standards from AU and SADC and international entities such as UNESCO and OECD are instrumental and offer useful benchmarks, although alignment is still a challenge. In Tunisia, the GIZ has collaborated with the Tunisian Ministry of Energy, Industry and Mines to launch a "Towards an Industry 4.0 in Tunisia" roadmap, which focuses heavily on interconnectivity, automation, machine learning, and real-time data.[299]

The private sector also has a significant influence on policy processes. Concerns about digital colonialism and dependency on foreign AI infrastructure and models are also prevalent, raising questions about data sovereignty and the alignment of imported technologies with local needs and rights. In South Africa and in countries where they have a significant presence, US technology companies such as Microsoft, Google, and Meta maintain a strong lobbying presence, and their representatives often participate in government briefings and promote their products, indicating corporate influence in policy and technology choices.[300] In Nigeria, Google and the Gates Foundation have provided crucial financial and technical support and promoted the adoption of global standards in policy processes.[301] In Ethiopia, Chinese companies, such as Huawei and ZTE, are building the foundational digital infrastructure in the country, and are likely to be influential in policy and technology choices.[302] In Tunisia, the engagement and preference of international organisations in the national AI strategy raised questions about sidelining local talent and expertise, leading to speculation that the process was externally driven and not placing emphasis on human rights.[303]

[295] 193 countries adopt first-ever global agreement on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1106612; Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

[296] The Bletchley Declaration by Countries Attending the AI Safety Summit, 1-2 November 2023 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-safety-summit-2023-the-bletchley-declaration/the-bletchley-declaration-by-countries-attending-the-ai-safety-summit-1-2-november-2023

[297] Egyptian Charter for Responsible AI, https://aicm.ai.gov.eg/en/Resources/EgyptianCharterForResponsibleAIEnglish-v1.0.pdf

[298] Kenya Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2025-2030, https://ict.go.ke/sites/default/files/2025-03/Kenya%20AI%20Strategy%202025%20-%202030.pdf

[299] "Towards an Industry 4.O In Tunisia", Deutsche Gesellschaft für Coopération internationale (GIZ) GmbH, November 02; 2020, https://invest-for-jobs.com/assets/media/dateien/Towards-an-I4.0-in-Tunisia.pdf.

[300] AI Now Institute. "6. Reflections on South Africa's AI Industrial Policy." AI Now Institute, April 2025. https://ainowinstitute.org/publications/reflections-on-south-africas-ai-industrial-policy; Interview with Dr. Scott Timcke, Senior Research Fellow, Research ICT Africa (Cape Town, July 2025) 21

[301] BudgIT, AI, Society, and the Nigerian Reality: A Match Made in Data Heaven? , https://budgit.org/ai-society-and-the-nigerian-reality-a-match-made-in-data-heaven/

[302] Ethiopia signs $1.6bn LTE deal with ZTE, Huaweihttps://www.telecoms.com/wireless-networking/ethiopia-signs-1-6bn-lte-deal-with-zte-huawei; Ethio Telecom and Huawei Complete North Africa's First Live Deployment of GigaAAU FDD Tri-Band Massive MIMO https://www.huawei.com/en/news/2025/8/gigaaau-fdd-tribandmassive-mimo; ZTE empowers Ethio Telecom with FTTR-B solution to build Africa's first all-optical government office https://www.eastafricainfrastructureexpo.com/2025/05/30/zte-empowers-ethio-telecom-with-fttr-b-solution-to-build-africas-first-all-optical-government-office/

[303] Aymen Zaghdoudi, Malek Khadhraoui et Gérald Holubowicz, "Journalisme et IA: enjeux et opportunités de l'intelligence artificielle en Tunisie," Pamt, July 21, 2025, https://pamt2.org/ressources_post/journalisme-et-ia-enjeux-et-opportunites-de-lintelligence-artificielle-en-tunisie/.

Local civil society organisations and academia are increasingly active in advocacy, awareness-raising, research, and contributing to the development of ethical frameworks. However, their influence on formal policy and legislative processes remains limited, perhaps due to bureaucratic procedures to access and influence processes.

4.4.3 Capacity of the Key Stakeholders

While awareness of AI's potential benefits is growing, for instance in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Tunisia, South Africa, and Uganda, digital and AI literacy levels were generally low, especially in Ethiopia, Namibia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe. As a result, there is a widespread lack of public understanding of AI risks, rights implications, and regulatory safeguards, especially in rural and marginalised areas.

In most of the study countries, there is also a shortage of technical expertise, especially of AI professionals within academia, policymakers, regulators, the private sector, and civil society, who can design, audit, explain, or effectively regulate AI systems. In Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, experts warn of the impact of the "AI brain drain", stating that African AI postgraduates are ten times more likely to work in the Global North due to better pay, a development that could hinder local innovation and cripple institutional capacities to effectively regulate and implement AI.[304]

Moreover, regulatory bodies and key institutions across the study countries are generally under-resourced, understaffed, and lack the necessary technical capabilities to audit complex AI systems, investigate algorithmic harms, or effectively enforce existing laws in the context of AI. While there were some capacities in academia and the private sector, these remained limited across the countries. There is also limited coordination and fragmentation among critical government regulators, with some having overlapping mandates. This is further hampered by outdated and general-purpose laws that predate AI, which inhibit these institutions' capacity to enforce them to address concerns presented by AI.
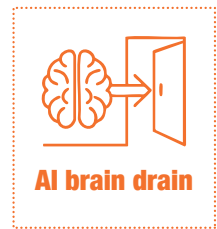
AI brain drain

African AI postgraduates are **ten times more** likely to work in the Global North due to better pay

4.4.4 Guiding or Foundational Principles and Approaches

There is a clear and widespread trend and consensus across the study countries towards articulating ethical and human rights-centred principles for AI. Many countries have developed or are in the process of developing national AI strategies and policies, often aligning with international frameworks like UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, OECD's 'Trustworthy AI' principles and the AU Continental AI Strategy.

The countries that have comprehensive and well-articulated principles include Kenya, South Africa, Egypt and Ghana. In February 2025, Kenya developed an "AI Statement of Principles,[305] which aims to anchor its AI governance framework in foundational principles that safeguard human rights, equity, and sustainability. Some of the principles include: Life-Centred and Human-Centred Design and Accountability; Equity and Fairness; Transparency and Public Trust; Safety, Security, and Resilience; International Collaboration and Ethical AI Development; Environmental Sustainability; Inclusive Participation and Cultural Relevance, and Robust Governance and Adaptive Regulation.

304 *Puchert, Daniel. "AI Brain Drain in South Africa." MyBroadband (blog), July 2025. https://mybroadband.co.za/news/ai/602692-ai-brain-drain-in-south-africa.html; How Digital Colonialism Threatens Kenya's Silicon Savannah https://www.techpolicy.press/how-digital-colonialism-threatens-kenyas-silicon-savannah/*

305 *AI Principles for Kenya: A Comprehensive Framework for Safe, Secure, Inclusive, Sustainable, and Trustworthy AI, KICTANet, Nairobi, KICTANet, 2025, https://www.kictanet.or.ke/?mdocs-file=50960*

In South Africa, the National AI Policy Framework adopted in August 2024, focuses on ethical, human-centred AI principles.[306] It outlines 12 strategic pillars guiding AI development, including ethics, transparency, fairness, data protection, infrastructure, public sector adoption, and cultural alignment. Civil society and tech communities have called for a rights-based AI governance model grounded in constitutional values, emphasising transparency, accountability, participation, and inclusivity.[307] Egypt adopted the Egyptian Charter for Responsible AI in 2023,[308] which aims to ensure ethical AI use, deployment, and management, incorporating principles such as fairness, transparency, human-centeredness, accountability, security, and safety. The Charter draws on international best practice and emphasises human rights-based governance frameworks to ensure AI serves the interests of all people.

Ghana's 2022 National AI Strategy[309] developed in partnership with Smart Africa, GIZ, and UNESCO, identified ethical, inclusive, and locally relevant AI as a national priority, explicitly linking it to digital rights protection, privacy, transparency, and accountability, while encouraging civic participation. It proposed the establishment of a Responsible AI Office to oversee implementation. Ethiopia ratified its National Artificial Intelligence Policy in July 2024, aiming, among others, to promote ethical innovation. The policy aligns with the AU Continental AI Strategy, which advocates for human rights alignment in national frameworks. Ethiopia also endorsed UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI.

In Nigeria, the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy includes principles such as responsible and ethical conduct, Inclusivity and Shared Prosperity, Sustainability, Collaboration, Innovation and Adaptation, Global Leadership, Transparency and Accountability, Human-Centric, Risk Management and Resilience, and Data Ethics and Agency. It also aims to define ethical principles to align with critical Nigerian values such as decoloniality, humanity, technical robustness and safety, inclusion, diversity, non-discrimination, accountability, solidarity, transparency, and responsible data governance.[310] Similarly, Senegal's National AI Strategy (2023–2028) has a pillar on "Ethical and Responsible AI" that seeks to "Ensure AI in Senegal is responsible, ethical, trustworthy, and respects sovereign prerogatives".[311]

Some experts are calling for the grounding of AI ethics in local values, such as the philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasises community, interdependence and collective benefit over individualism.[312] This is seen as a necessary response to "algorithmic colonisation", where Western-centric frameworks fail to address African realities. Also highlighted are data sovereignty and ethical datasets, as only 2.8% of global computer vision training datasets use African faces, highlighting critical discrimination. [313]

12

strategic pillars guiding AI development

ethics, transparency, fairness, data protection, infrastructure, public sector adoption, and cultural alignment

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306 Michalsons. "South African National AI Policy | Guidance and Overview - Michalsons." Michalsons, July 2025. https://www.michalsons.com/focus-areas/artificial-intelligence-law/national-ai-policy-guidance-and-overview.

307 Khene, C., Siebörger, I., & Thinyane, M. (2025). Critical design in civic tech in Southern Africa. In Digitalisation and Public Policy in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75079-3_3

308 National Council for AI, Egypt , Egyptian Charter For Responsible AI. p.1. https://aicm.ai.gov.eg/en/Resources/EgyptianCharterForResponsibleAIEnglish-v1.0.pdf

309 Law Gratis, Artificial Intelligence Law at Ghana (Law Gratis, 2024) https://www.lawgratis.com/blog-detail/artificial-intelligence-law-at-ghana

310 National Artificial Intelligence Strategy https://ncair.nitda.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/National-AI-Strategy_01082024-copy.pdf

311 Paris Peace Forum, Stratégie nationale IA du Sénégal, consulté le 12 août 2025 : https://parispeaceforum.org/fr/projets/strategie-nationale-ia-du-senegal/

312 Africa Pushes For Ethical AI Governance To Build Digital Sovereignty And Inclusive Development https://iafrica.com/africa-pushes-for-ethical-ai-governance-to-build-digital-sovereignty-and-inclusive-development/

313 'To Be Grounded In Our Lived Realities': Designing AI With African Intent https://www.forbesafrica.com/technology/2025/08/07/to-be-grounded-in-our-lived-realities-designing-ai-with-african-intent/

Some of the emerging principles and practices include:
- Human-centred: Consideration of human rights, fundamental freedoms, values, and well-being at the core of AI development and deployment, prioritising the enhancement of human capabilities over replacement and ensuring meaningful human control, transparency, fairness, and inclusivity in AI systems.
- Transparency and Explainability: Requiring clear explanations for AI decisions and publicly accessible documentation.
- Accountability and Redress: Establishing clear liability for AI-related harms and accessible mechanisms for citizens to challenge decisions and seek remedies.
- Fairness and Non-discrimination: Designing AI to prevent bias, expand equitable access, and reflect local linguistic and demographic diversity. This includes specific attention to gender, disability, and minority rights.
- Privacy and Data Protection: Implementing robust data governance, including data protection principles and compliance with data protection rights.
- Human Oversight and Control: Ensuring human judgment, particularly in critical sectors and for decisions affecting fundamental rights, is not replaced by AI.
- Inclusivity and Cultural Relevance: Developing AI that reflects local languages, cultures, and socio-economic realities, and is inspired by philosophies like Ubuntu.

The national policies and strategies frequently emphasise human-centeredness, transparency, accountability, fairness, and non-discrimination. Despite the articulation of guiding principles and comprehensive action plans by various stakeholders, there is a significant gap between policy intentions and their actual translation into binding legislation and practical, enforceable safeguards. Such gaps could expose citizens to unregulated AI technologies and rights violations.

5. Discussion of the Study Findings

The integration of Artificial Intelligence across the study countries presents a profoundly dualistic impact on civic space, digital rights, and digital democracy. While AI is increasingly being recognised as a catalyst for socio-economic development, improved governance, and enhanced citizen participation, its current design, deployment, use, and governance are simultaneously introducing significant risks and challenges that could erode digital rights, curtail civic engagement, and undermine democratic processes across the continent. The trajectory of AI's influence is largely contingent on the existing socio-political context, the robustness of regulatory frameworks, and the commitment to human rights-centred governance.

5.1 AI as a Tool for Empowerment and Expansion of Civic Space

Results from the study show that AI is expanding access to information and content creation abilities across Africa, with a positive impact on civic space, digital rights, and digital democracy. However, the contribution and benefits of AI remain unevenly distributed across the 14 study countries. A clear pattern emerges where some nations are demonstrating more sophistication, while others show promise with emerging initiatives, as others lag, perhaps due to structural challenges that severely limit the practical application of AI.

Democratising Content Creation and Facilitating Digital Activism

With respect to content creation, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Otter, and Canva have democratised and lowered barriers to content creation. They enable individuals, journalists, and civil society to produce and share diverse localised multimedia content more efficiently and dynamically, thus amplifying their voices online and on social media platforms. Some of the more sophisticated deployments across the study countries include AI news anchors by TVC News in Nigeria, capable of communicating in five local languages to bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps.[314]

AI tools enable civil society and activists to create compelling advocacy content, automate messaging, and coordinate public mobilisation for civic causes. In South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Cameroon, Tunisia and Uganda, AI tools have been used for creating media, advocacy, and personal creative expression. In other countries, AI-based content creation is more basic, focusing on workflow efficiency and digital content creation on popular social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. In Kenya, during the 2024 and 2025 anti-Finance Bill protests, AI-generated images and animations were used to express dissent, ridicule political figures, and comment on government policies[315].

The use of such AI-enabled creative tools and applications can lead to the diversification of the information landscape, amplify voices, and support new forms of activism and civic engagement, thereby enhancing freedom of expression and invigorating civic space. Consequently, they expand freedom of expression and political participation, including by enabling new forms of activism, media freedom and digital expression, and contribute to the diversification of narratives, thus strengthening digital democracy.

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[314] TVC News, TVC News Debuts First AI Enabled Anchors in Five Languages, https://www.tvcnews.tv/tvc-news-debuts-first-ai-enabled-anchors-in-five-languages/

[315] University World News – AI tools became key mediums for political protest in Kenya after government crackdowns on physical demonstrations. Students created viral AI-generated silhouette animations to critique political leaders. https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20250204100939733

Enhancing Access to Public Information and Services

AI-powered e-governance platforms, chatbots, and data visualisation tools are simplifying access to government data, legislative records, and public services. Examples from Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, and Uganda have shown the use of AI tools to enhance transparency, including aspects such as simplifying government data, providing voter education, and improving public service information. These AI tools improve the speed, accessibility, and relevance of information disseminated to the general public, which is fundamental for digital democracy.

Some of the notable use cases include platforms for election information, such as South Africa's AskIEC and Senegal's Jangat-App. Public accountability tools such as Kenya's Sauti ya Bajeti, Nigeria's Service-Wise GPT and Bimi AI-chatbot, and South Africa's OCL's use AI to analyse government financial data. Others, such as Dubawa's AI-enabled WhatsApp fact-checking chatbot and Dataphyte's Nubia story-generation platform from Nigeria, have enhanced access to information. Countries such as Cameroon, Tunisia, and Namibia are implementing e-governance initiatives and multilingual public registries to improve citizen access to information. Uganda, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe are also using AI for basic service delivery. DeafCanTalk in Ghana is a notable example of how AI tools can enhance accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

AI, particularly through multilingual processing and translation tools as shown in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda, is breaking down language barriers, enabling greater access to information, and fostering local content creation. This empowers individuals and communities, especially marginalised linguistic groups, to participate more fully in public discourse. In Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, journalists and civil society organisations leverage AI for fact-checking, investigative reporting, and data analysis, thereby strengthening information integrity and accountability.

Breaking Language Barriers and Promoting Inclusivity

AI-powered translation and Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools have enabled the creation and sharing of content in local languages, thus bridging the language and cultural divide. Availability of localised content ensures participation of previously excluded linguistic minority communities, illiterate populations, and rural communities, allowing them to engage with digital content, public services, and political discourse. It could also support cultural preservation in the digital realm.

Examples from South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia and Ethiopia show significant efforts in the development of datasets, specialised projects developing NLP models (for example, Masakhane, Lelapa AI, Khaya, Awa, Leyu and TUNBERT), the use of voice chatbots, and multilingual translation services such as InkubaLM and Botlhale AI, which translate various African languages. The levels in countries such as Uganda, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zimbabwe are still nascent efforts, with reliance on mostly basic AI tools and general AI features on social media applications.

AI-powered assistive technologies have also been used to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities and linguistic minorities. The leaders here include Ghana's DeafCanTalk App used for sign language translation, AI-powered assistive tools for persons with disabilities used in Ethiopia and Kenya, and applications to expand text-to-speech for non-literate populations in Kenya.

Strengthening Fact-Checking and Countering Disinformation
The use of AI has been crucial in safeguarding information and election integrity. All countries recognise the threat of AI-driven disinformation. Fact-checking organisations across the continent, including in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, use AI tools for fact-checking, disinformation detection, and sentiment analysis. In Ethiopia, Ghana and South Africa, there are various chatbots and AI tools for fact-checking, accessing, and analysing information and to combat AI-generated misinformation, which is crucial for maintaining information integrity during elections. The AI tools help to monitor, verify, and counter the spread of disinformation, particularly during elections. As a result, they limit the manipulation of public opinion, maintaining trust and protecting citizens' rights to reliable information.

Improved Public Services Delivery and Social Accountability
Governments in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia and Uganda are deploying AI to streamline services, detect fraud, manage resources, and enhance citizen engagement. As seen in South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria, platforms for citizen feedback, participatory budgeting, and simplified access to government data can increase transparency and responsiveness, offering new avenues for civic participation. Moreover, AI tools are being used by civil society and media to monitor elections, track disinformation, conduct fact-checking, analyse public expenditure, and hold state and non-state actors accountable. Examples from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe show that such AI uses contribute to a more informed citizenry and contribute to more robust democratic processes.

Increased Investment in AI Infrastructure
The study notes that there is increasing investment in digital infrastructure to support the development of AI systems. The expansion and growth of internet connectivity, the establishment of ICT and innovation hubs, investments in diverse AI startups across key sectors, the development of data centres, and expansion of training opportunities point to an ecosystem that can facilitate and contribute to the expansion of the digital economy. As a consequence, these are likely to facilitate more users going online and using AI tools for socio-economic development, which in turn is beneficial to democratisation efforts.

5.2 AI as a Mechanism for Control and Constriction of Civic Space

Amplification of Disinformation and Manipulation of Digital Content

Generative AI has dramatically lowered the barrier to entry for creating sophisticated and manipulated digital content, such as deepfakes and political propaganda, threatening electoral integrity and public trust in democratic processes. Such content developed at an unprecedented scale, particularly during elections, remains a pervasive and critical threat to information and election integrity. They also undermine public trust in information, distort democratic discourse, and can incite social divisions and violence. Social media algorithms often exacerbate this by amplifying sensational or polarising content.

Escalating Mass Surveillance

The study notes that many governments are actively deploying or investing in AI-powered surveillance technologies, including CCTV with facial recognition, surveillance applications, and social media monitoring tools. These systems are frequently used to target and track activists, journalists, political opponents, and ordinary citizens, leading to a severe chilling effect on freedom of expression, assembly, and association. As seen in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe, the lack of transparency, oversight and legal safeguards for such deployments poses a direct threat to privacy and due process.

Algorithmic Bias and Exclusion

As seen across the study countries, particularly in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe, foreign AI models, often trained on non-representative and non-African datasets, frequently exhibit bias that disadvantages local languages, cultures, and marginalised groups. When deployed without thorough interrogation, they can lead to discriminatory outcomes in service delivery, misinterpretation of local dialects, and the reinforcement of existing or historical socio-economic inequalities, exacerbating the digital divide.

Weak Content Moderation and Censorship

Social media platforms are often criticised for not investing enough in their automated content moderation systems deployed in the continent to ensure they have contextual understanding. As witnessed in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, this omission can lead to poor outcomes in the moderation of content in local languages, such as the disproportionate removal of legitimate political content, satire, or posts in local languages or the non-removal of harmful content. Likewise, overzealous moderation, whether by platforms or governments, can result in the censorship and suppression of legitimate content, dissent, and disproportionately affect journalists and civil society. In addition, the human moderators employed by the big tech companies are often subjected to deplorable working conditions, including exposure to graphic content that has lasting psychological trauma; they are poorly paid and lack negotiating leverage.

Lack of Accountability

Whereas there is progress in strengthening legal frameworks across the study countries to regulate AI, the absence of clear legal frameworks targeting AI-specific issues, such as algorithmic accountability, is a lingering problem. While some data protection laws address wanton data collection and automated decision-making, redress mechanisms for individuals affected by AI-driven decisions remain weak. The situation is worse where new AI innovations and products are continuously being deployed to unsuspecting users without adequate oversight, impact assessments or accountability mechanisms. These are aggravated by the limitations in technical capacity and resources within key regulatory institutions to review and oversee the new AI innovations and products, and the low awareness of the public to understand the risks, harms and impact of emerging AI systems being deployed across the study countries.

Growing AI and Digital Divide

Across the countries, digital infrastructure, connectivity, technical skills and literacy gaps remain the biggest bottleneck to AI adoption and usage. Scaling AI's potential will require data, cloud services, and reliable internet and electricity, which many countries and people living in rural and marginalised areas still lack. If these are not addressed, it means that AI will continue to widen the digital divide, benefiting the already well-to-do, digitally privileged, educated, and connected urban dwellers, and leaving out the poor, rural, marginalised and digitally excluded communities across the continent.

5.3 Implications for Digital Rights and Democracy in Africa

Regulatory landscapes are fragile

None of the studied countries has an AI-specific law. The vast majority of the study countries primarily rely on their data protection laws for AI regulation, save for Mozambique and Namibia, which do not have such laws. These are complemented by cybersecurity, consumer protection, and intellectual property laws, which are general, outdated and predate AI, thus insufficient and ineffective to address high-risk AI applications. The situation has created a "governance gap" which allows AI technologies to be deployed with insufficient human rights safeguards, leaving citizens vulnerable to misuse and potential risks and abuses.

Moreover, regulatory institutions established under these laws across the study countries lack the necessary capacity, technical expertise, political independence and resources to enable them to oversee and audit complex AI systems, investigate harms, or enforce compliance against powerful state and non-state actors such as big tech companies deploying various AI technologies. Further, while there are significant efforts across countries to adopt national AI strategies, these largely prioritise economic growth or over-comprehensive human rights protection.

Further, AI governance processes have so far tended to be state-dominated and technocratic, often involving limited, episodic, or selective consultations with local stakeholders. At times, the processes are rushed, opaque, and largely influenced by the objectives of development partners. Consequently, the failure to integrate and ensure multistakeholder participation could undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of emerging policies and strategies.
Erosion of Trust in Digital Information and Institutions

The pervasive spread of AI-generated disinformation, coupled with opaque content moderation and state surveillance, cultivates widespread scepticism towards online content and public institutions such as Election Management Bodies, judiciaries, and national parliaments. This erodes the very foundation of informed public discourse, which is essential for a healthy digital democracy.

Vulnerability to Digital Colonialism and Foreign Influence

A significant concern is the over-reliance on foreign-developed AI tools and models, often trained on non-African data, raising questions about data sovereignty and the importation of foreign bias or surveillance models. Many countries are relying on foreign proprietary AI technologies developed by big tech companies, which could subject them to potential risks from the outcomes of the growing geopolitical and trade wars around semiconductor chips and other AI technologies. Also, some of the disinformation campaigns have been sponsored by foreign actors based outside the continent, which can influence narratives in the digital public sphere. Such trends can hinder the development of contextually relevant local solutions and perpetuate dependency.

Towards Human Rights-Centred Governance The findings highlight the need for comprehensive, human rights-centred AI governance frameworks. This includes enacting specific AI legislation, establishing independent oversight bodies with diverse multi-stakeholder representation, mandating human rights impact assessments for AI deployments, and investing in digital/AI literacy programmes to empower citizens. As a result, effective policy leadership and harmonisation, robust government strategies, careful implementation of AI, and institutional coordination across the continent can accelerate AI readiness and build public confidence and trust.

The Intersectionality of Digital Rights Violations AI systems disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalised groups (women, rural populations, linguistic minorities, informal traders, persons with disabilities) by exacerbating existing inequalities and creating new forms of digital discrimination, as seen in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Any AI governance framework must also address these intersectional vulnerabilities not only within countries, but also the regional inequalities across countries.

5.4 Actions to Strengthen Participatory, Transparent, Accountable and Human Rights-Centred AI Governance

Across the study countries, there was a strong consensus on the adoption of multistakeholder approaches to ensure the meaningful involvement and participation of all relevant stakeholders in AI policy-making processes. Other priority areas identified include the need to develop comprehensive, AI-specific laws and policies; the establishment of independent AI ethics/oversight bodies; strengthening of existing regulatory agencies with resources and technical expertise; and promoting inter-agency coordination.

Also highlighted was the need to build AI literacy and digital rights awareness among all stakeholders, investments in addressing the digital divide, the development of AI tools that prioritise local languages, cultural contexts, and specific African challenges, and reducing dependence on foreign models and promoting data sovereignty. There were also calls to strengthen coalitions and networks, and to promote monitoring, advocacy, interdisciplinary research, ethical standards, accountability and transparency on AI.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has examined the multifaceted interplay between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital democracy across 14 African countries, aiming to fill critical knowledge gaps regarding its impact on civic space and digital democracy. While AI presents transformative opportunities for strengthening digital democracy, expanding civic space, and protecting digital rights in Africa, its current trajectory is marked by an imbalance. Despite the excitement and speed towards AI adoption, not all AI risks and impacts are well known or understood, and the continent is likely to witness various intended consequences and new unexpected and uncertain ones, and trade-offs. Therefore, without a careful, deliberate, proactive, and rights-based approach to AI governance in Africa that is inclusive, transparent, and contextually relevant, AI risks becoming a powerful tool that deepens existing inequalities, facilitates authoritarian control, and fundamentally undermines democratic values and human rights across the continent. Governments also appear to be at a crossroads, with the choice to either harness AI as a force for positive change or to deploy it as a tool for digital authoritarianism.

6.1 Summary of Study Findings

The study's findings reveal that AI in Africa presents a paradox: on the one hand, it is a powerful tool and catalyst for socio-economic transformation and democratic enhancement, yet on the other, it amplifies existing vulnerabilities and introduces new challenges and risks that undermine fundamental freedoms and deepen existing inequalities, as highlighted below.

On the value and opportunities of AI to Africa's civic space and digital rights, the study identified that AI is being deployed across diverse sectors, including governance, healthcare, agriculture, finance, media, and civic space, offering substantial value. AI tools such as predictive analytics, chatbots, and translation engines are being leveraged to improve public service delivery, enhance transparency, facilitate citizen engagement, support civic innovation, and enable data-driven advocacy. Notably, countries like Kenya and South Africa showcase AI's role in citizen engagement platforms and data analysis for public policy. In addition, tools for local language content creation and fact-checking are emerging across the continent. These applications demonstrate AI's capacity to democratise knowledge, protect civic liberties, and amplify public participation, particularly for underrepresented groups, by bridging language barriers and improving accessibility to essential services and information.

However, these opportunities are being overshadowed by the growing challenges and risks. Key among these is the proliferation of disinformation and manipulated content. AI-generated multimedia content, including deepfakes, automated bots, and synthetic media, poses a significant threat given AI's use in manipulating public opinion and influencing election outcomes across the study countries. Secondly, the escalating and unchecked deployment of AI-powered surveillance systems, such as CCTV with facial recognition, mobile-phone spyware, and biometric ID systems by both state and private actors, is leading to widespread privacy violations, tracking, and profiling of citizens. This creates a palpable "chilling effect" on free expression and assembly, particularly for journalists, activists, and minority communities. Thirdly, algorithmic bias remains a pervasive risk, often arising from AI systems, including content moderation systems trained on non-representative, foreign datasets that fail to reflect Africa's diverse linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic realities. This exacerbates existing inequalities, leading to discriminatory outcomes in access to essential services and information, and marginalising vulnerable populations.

While many countries are developing national AI strategies and policies, the analysis of AI governance frameworks shows a lack of comprehensive and enforceable AI-specific legal and regulatory frameworks. Regulatory bodies are often under-resourced and lack the technical expertise to oversee complex AI systems. Existing laws on data protection, intellectual property, cybersecurity, or consumer protection, though relevant, are generally insufficient to address the complexities of AI, such as algorithmic explainability and liability. Given this regulatory gap, AI development will continue to outpace effective AI governance, potentially leaving citizens vulnerable to unchecked harm from the technologies.

Finally, the study highlights the need for a human-centred AI governance in Africa, through deliberate and inclusive approaches. Kenya's AI Principles, South Africa's AI Policy Framework, and Egypt's Responsible AI Charter already articulate key principles like transparency, accountability, and fairness. However, their translation into binding legislation and practical safeguards remains outstanding. Also concerning is that while AI policy development processes are increasing, multistakeholder engagement remains ad hoc, with key processes remaining top-down and often omitting the participation of diverse voices from key stakeholders, especially civil society, academia, and marginalised groups.

Implications of the Findings

The overarching implication is that Africa is at a critical juncture where the trajectory of AI deployment will profoundly shape its democratic future. The observed trends indicate a fragile state of digital democracy where AI can accelerate digital authoritarianism and threaten human rights. The pervasive spread of AI-generated disinformation in the absence of transparent, accountable AI governance mechanisms is systematically eroding public trust in information sources, electoral processes, and democratic institutions, which are vital for civic participation.

The unchecked deployment of AI-powered surveillance, coupled with opaque content moderation practices, creates a chilling effect on free expression and assembly, directly shrinking the space for independent media, activism, and dissent. The compounding effects of digital illiteracy, infrastructure gaps, language barriers, and algorithmic bias mean that AI is currently more likely to exacerbate existing socio-economic and digital inequalities rather than bridge them, further marginalising vulnerable groups. The reliance on imported AI technologies and the influence of global tech giants, coupled with limited local expertise, capacity and resources, may potentially hinder AI development tailored to African contexts and priorities. These developments portend severe consequences if current trends persist. Consequently, if these challenges remain unaddressed, AI will, rather than universally fostering empowerment, likely continue reinforcing existing power imbalances and systemic discrimination.

This study is significant as it fills critical knowledge gaps by comprehensively examining the impact of AI on civic space and digital democracy in Africa. It provides an understanding of AI's dual role as both an innovation driver and a potential risk to digital rights and democracy. Ultimately, it documents the evolving situation of AI in Africa and provides strategic recommendations to ensure AI supports, rather than undermines, democratic values. To build upon these findings, future research should consider measuring AI's economic impact across different sectors, tracking the evolution of AI governance frameworks, or assessing how AI impacts marginalised communities.

6.2 Recommendations

The recommendations below outline practical actions for various stakeholder groups to ensure that the manner in which AI is developed and deployed strengthens digital democracy and protects human rights in Africa.

Government and Regulatory Bodies

- Enact Comprehensive AI Legislation aligned with national constitutions, international human rights standards (e.g., ICCPR), and regional frameworks (e.g., AU AI Strategy, UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI). These should be contextualised for the continent and integrate clear provisions on algorithmic transparency, explainability, human oversight, liability, and the right to redress. They should also prohibit harmful AI practices such as biometric categorisation of sensitive traits, social scoring systems, and real-time remote biometric identification by law enforcement without judicial oversight. These should be carefully developed through multistakeholder proceses while ensuring instruments from other regions are not super-imposed or copy-pasted by African countries.
- Develop regional instruments, guidelines and standards on AI that promote responsible, human-centred and ethical AI governance, innovation and human development across Africa. AU level institutions and Regional Economic Communities should lead and coordinate such initiatives.
- Require mandatory Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIAs) for all high-risk AI systems, particularly in the public sector, and ensure the results are made public and inform decision-making.
- Establish or empower independent, well-resourced AI and data governance institutions including at the regional level (e.g., AI commissions, ethics boards and Data Protection Authorities) with multidisciplinary experts and clear mandates for oversight, and capacity to audit AI systems, investigate rights violations, and handle complaints effectively. Inter-agency coordination across the continent should also be strengthened to eliminate regulatory gaps.
- Invest in digital Infrastructure and Inclusion, including by expanding internet access, reducing device and access costs, and improving digital infrastructure, especially in marginalised and underserved areas. AI strategies and tools should be developed to prioritise local languages, cultural relevance, and respond to local needs and realities.
- Ensure all AI deployment and use in the public sector is transparent and auditable, including publishing procurement disclosures, providing clear explanations of AI systems' purpose, usage, and implications, and making safeguards publicly accessible.
- Strengthen efforts to combat AI-driven online hate speech and disinformation, including by promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration, encouraging the development of AI tools for fact-checking, updating electoral laws to guide the ethical use of AI in political campaigning, ensuring mandatory disclosure of AI-generated content and prohibiting manipulative deepfakes.

Private Sector and Tech Community

- Adopt and implement "rights-by-design", ethical AI principles and industry codes of conduct that explicitly include human rights principles from the outset of AI system development.
- Enhance algorithmic transparency and accountability by publishing transparency reports (e.g., on government data requests, content removals), disclosing training data sources and model documentation to allow for scrutiny by civil society and independent experts, and subject high-impact AI systems to independent audits.
- Increase AI Investments and prioritise the development of AI tools that are inclusive and contextually relevant for Africa, support local AI professionals, local AI startups and innovation hubs, and provide affordable and accessible AI services for underserved communities.
- Strengthen and integrate robust detection systems for deepfakes, hate speech, and coordinated disinformation campaigns, implement clear tagging or watermarking of AI-generated content, and ensure timely responses to reports of harmful content from the region.
- Ensure all AI practices align and comply with regional and international human rights standards (e.g., ICCPR, UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, ACHPR Resolution 630/2025, AU Data Policy Framework and AU AI Strategy).
- Design AI systems in ways that promote human development and agency, to ensure humans can steer their future according to their values, needs and goals.

Civil Society Organisations

- Advocate for rights-based AI governance reforms grounded in constitutional values, international human rights standards, and regional frameworks, to ensure robust legal protections for digital rights.
- Advocate for equitable access to AI services and technologies, ensuring that AI benefits are inclusive and reach all segments of society, particularly rural populations, women, persons with disabilities, and linguistic minorities.
- Demand transparency and accountability from state and non-state actors on AI deployments, algorithms, and decision-making processes, challenge discriminatory practices and abuses through public interest litigation, and report abuse through channels on available platforms.
- Build technical and research capacity of key stakeholders to monitor and document AI's impact on human rights (social, economic, and political), including by establishing accessible reporting channels for AI abuse, and collecting evidence-based case studies of AI abuses and their effects, including on vulnerable, rural and marginalised groups.
- Conduct comprehensive digital and AI literacy campaigns by providing accessible information, communication, and education materials to enhance public awareness and understanding of AI risks, opportunities, and digital rights.
- Form and strengthen movements and coalitions to enhance advocacy efforts and multistakeholder participation in AI policy-making processes, ensuring that diverse perspectives, including from digitally excluded, vulnerable and marginalised groups, are heard and integrated.
- Partner with local developers and communities to foster inclusive AI tools that address context-specific challenges and enhance benefits, such as in education, access to justice, and civic participation in the region.

Media and Journalists

- Conduct Independent, multidisciplinary and evidence-based research on AI's societal impacts in African contexts, including its influence on political participation, media consumption, public service delivery, algorithmic biases, and civic space to fill critical knowledge gaps.
- Develop Interdisciplinary AI Curricula that, for example, integrate ethics and digital democracy modules into AI and computer science courses, or AI into journalism, political science, and law, to foster a new generation of ethically conscious professionals and policymakers.
- Contribute and disseminate evidence-based input to public convenings and policy processes through relevant research briefs and publications.
- Develop open-access datasets and benchmarks that reflect African languages, cultural contexts, and democratic priorities to mitigate algorithmic bias, promote local innovation and relevance, and counter bias from foreign datasets.
- Develop strategies to safeguard journalists from targeted AI-enabled surveillance and report critically on the use and deployment of AI applications for surveillance.

The Public

- Undertake digital and AI literacy to engage responsibly with AI-mediated civic spaces, effectively identify misinformation and deepfakes, understand privacy risks, and assert digital rights.
- Participate in AI governance processes to shape policies that affect their digital lives.
- Use secure communication tools to protect privacy and freedom of expression in an increasingly surveilled digital landscape.
- Report abuse through the available channels on the relevant platforms.
- Refrain from unethical and irresponsible use of AI technologies.