Convergence

Q3 AI in Africa

Summary Report

2025

AI & Data Governance

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www.convergenceai.io

ABOUT US

At ConvergenceAI, we are dedicated to fostering the adoption of AI in Africa, mainly for economic growth and transformation through innovation, research and development, advising policies, and collaboration with key stakeholders. We aim to utilize AI as a catalyst for holistic growth and economic transformation on the continent.

This report was gathered through desk research of various African initiatives from July to September 2025, the year's third quarter (Q3).

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List of Abbreviations

AI – Artificial Intelligence.

ACTS - African Centre for Technology Studies.

CDC - Centres for Disease Control.

DPA - Data Protection Authority.

DPIA - Data Protection Impact Assessment.

ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States.

GSR - Global Symposium for Regulators.

ICT - Information Communication and Technology.

MACRA - Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority.

NCAI - National Council for Artificial Intelligence.

NDPC - Nigeria Data Protection Commission.

ODPC - Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

PAP - Pan-African Parliament.

Q3 - Quarter 3.

RAM - Readiness Assessment Methodology.

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals.

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

VPA - Virtual Privacy Academy.

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Executive Summary

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformative technology driving socio-economic growth across Africa. AI is increasingly positioned as a catalyst for innovation, unlocking opportunities across various sectors, including health, education, agriculture, and finance. However, realizing these benefits requires navigating significant challenges, including limited infrastructure, funding constraints, skill gaps, and, most importantly, regulatory challenges. Developing tailored, ethical and inclusive regulatory frameworks has become central to Africa's AI journey

Across the continent, governments and institutions are gradually shaping these frameworks, moving from high-level declarations to concrete action. The African Union's draft continental AI strategy, along with various national AI strategies and readiness assessment methodologies, reflects Africa's determination to chart its path toward responsible AI adoption. Importantly, regulation is no longer a constraint but a necessary foundation for innovation, education, and public trust.

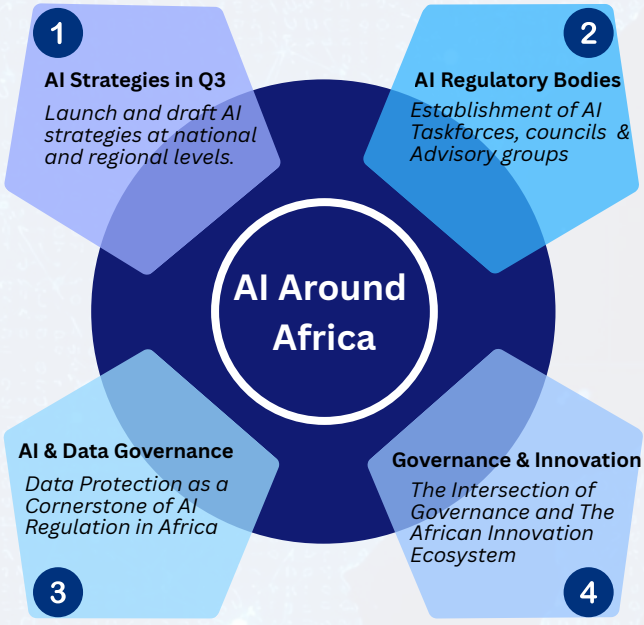


fig 1: Q3 AI Around Africa Key Trends

In Q3 2025, regulation remained a defining theme in Africa's AI landscape. Cameroon became the only country to launch a new national AI strategy this quarter, while others, such as Zimbabwe and Uganda, advanced draft and assessment documents.

Governments also moved to establish AI-specific regulatory authorities and tools, with South Africa launching its National AI Stakeholder Forum, Nigeria strengthening its AI governance frameworks, and Malawi preparing a regulatory sandbox.

Sector-specific regulations, particularly in the education sector, were also observed. ECOWAS began drafting a regional legal framework for AI in education, Tanzania rolled out a classroom-focused AI framework, and Zambia initiated discussions on a policy for generative AI in higher education. These developments underscore how education has become a testing ground for responsible AI regulation on the continent.

Data governance and protection also continued to evolve in tandem with AI regulation. With Egypt adopting its first National Open Data Policy, Senegal deepening cooperation with international bodies on AI and data, and the Pan-African Parliament emphasizing data sovereignty, it is clear that the lines between AI and data regulation are increasingly blurred. Strong data frameworks are proving indispensable to building trusted and effective AI ecosystems.

African countries are increasingly adopting a multi-faceted regulatory approach to guide the responsible development and use of AI technologies. Key trends identified in this report are as follows:

- Launch and draft AI strategies at national and regional levels.
- Establishment of AI regulatory bodies and tools.
- The convergence of AI regulation and data protection.
- How AI and Data Regulation are shaping Africa's Innovation ecosystems.

AI Regulation Across Africa

Adoption of AI Strategies

By the start of Q3 2025, the momentum toward AI governance in Africa had accelerated, with a growing number of countries developing dedicated frameworks. The number of nations with established national AI strategies or policies had grown notably. Countries that had launched national AI strategies or comprehensive digital plans, including those with an emphasis on AI, by the end of Q2 2025, included Mauritius, Egypt, Senegal, Benin, Tunisia, Ghana, Zambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Namibia, and Côte d'Ivoire.

In parallel, several countries, such as Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Lesotho, have advanced their policy-level frameworks while South Africa continues to refine its draft AI policy. This continuous trend reflects a shift from high-level declarations to a more hands-on approach to policy-making.

AI Strategies in Q3 2025

Cameroon National AI Strategy

In July 2025, Cameroon unveiled its first National AI Strategy, a landmark policy aimed at positioning the country as Africa's leading AI hub by 2040[1]. It became the only country to launch a National AI strategy in Q3 2025. The approach is anchored in the principles of sovereignty, inclusiveness, and sustainability, and emphasizes the integration of African cultural realities into technological development. It sets ambitious goals, including training 60,000 people, 40 percent of whom will be women, creating 12,000 direct jobs, generating a GDP contribution of between 0.8% and 1.2%, and developing 12 sovereign, high-impact AI solutions.

A distinctive feature of the plan is its focus on linguistic diversity, with initiatives to create multilingual models, including a dedicated GPT Cameroon, to preserve and promote national languages. Despite being ranked relatively low in AI readiness by the IMF, with a score of 0.34/1, Cameroon's strategy is designed to close gaps in digital infrastructure and innovation while capitalizing on the country's human capital potential.

The roadmap is structured around seven interdependent pillars defining the country's long-term AI vision. The first pillar focuses on governance and sovereignty, advocating for the establishment of a national AI authority, a Presidential Council on AI, and a framework law to ensure the ethical and coordinated adoption of AI. The second emphasizes data and infrastructure, including a government Data Lake, mass digitization of public services, interoperability standards, and a national Open Data policy. The third highlights inclusiveness through the development of local language models and the promotion of linguistic research, while the fourth prioritizes sovereign technological infrastructure, with plans to deploy 15 regional edge computing nodes powered by solar microgrids.

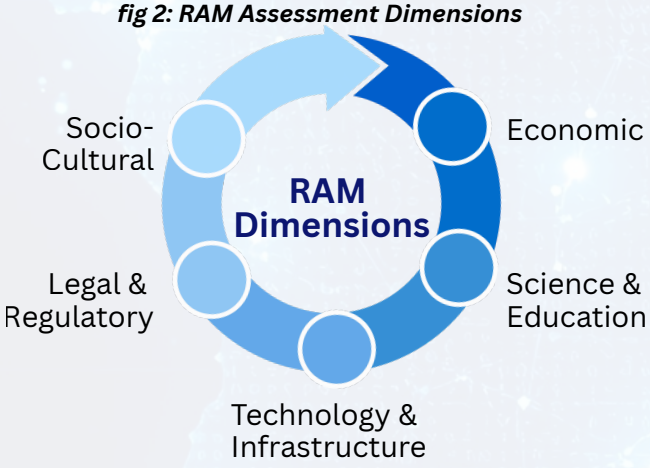
The fifth pillar concentrates on human capital, envisioning five AI centers of excellence, diaspora engagement, and annual training for 4,000 people. The sixth pillar advances innovation and sectoral applications in health, agriculture, justice, and education, supported by startup accelerators. Finally, the seventh pillar underscores regional cooperation and international partnerships, aiming to establish an AI network for Central Africa and expand "Made in Cameroon" digital solutions. Together, these pillars position Cameroon to strengthen its national development and emerge as a leading continental voice in the adoption of ethical and inclusive AI.

AI Readiness Assessment Methodologies (RAMs)

The Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM), developed by UNESCO, is a key tool designed to help countries implement the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, a global standard adopted by 193 Member States in 2021[2]. The RAM is a crucial diagnostic instrument, providing a comprehensive, multi-dimensional analysis of a country's AI ecosystem. This in-depth assessment is performed across five key dimensions: the legal and regulatory, technological and infrastructural, economic, scientific and educational, and socio-cultural aspects of a country's readiness for AI.

The methodology combines quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights gathered through extensive national consultations. These consultations involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector, ensuring that the final findings deeply reflect a country's unique local context and priorities.

fig 2: RAM Assessment Dimensions



A primary benefit of using RAM is that it provides a comprehensive diagnostic overview. It provides a precise tool for identifying specific gaps in institutional and governance frameworks that require attention. The final output is a report on a country's AI readiness status, along with a strategic roadmap and tailored recommendations. This enables UNESCO to provide customized support, helping governments develop and implement ethical and inclusive AI strategies that align with the global standards set by the Recommendation. The RAM process helps to build a multi-stakeholder consensus, attract international support, and ultimately ensure that the benefits of AI are harnessed responsibly and equitably for all citizens.

In Q3 2025, three African countries ;Tanzania, Namibia, and Egypt, each took a significant step toward responsible AI governance by launching their respective AI Readiness Assessment Reports. While all three utilized UNESCO's RAM as a foundational framework, they tailored the methodology to their specific national contexts, demonstrating a shared commitment to ethical AI development yet pursuing unique strategic goals and desired outcomes.

Tanzania

Tanzania took a significant step toward ethical and responsible AI governance by launching its AI Readiness Assessment Report in partnership with UNESCO's Regional Office for Eastern Africa in July 2025[3]. The assessment, built on the RAM framework, provides a diagnostic overview of Tanzania's preparedness to embed AI in ways that benefit all its citizens. The report highlights that while the country faces infrastructural and institutional challenges, it is actively engaging with the complexities and opportunities of AI, reflecting a clear commitment to harnessing the technology for national development. This marks a significant milestone in aligning Tanzania's digital transformation agenda with global ethical and inclusive AI use standards. The assessment's findings are now crucial for guiding the finalization of the country's own National AI Strategy.

Namibia

Namibia also advanced its AI governance journey by releasing its first AI Readiness Assessment Report, compiled by the National Commission on Research, Science, and Technology (NCRST) with UNESCO's support on August 12, 2025[4]. As the country's first comprehensive evaluation of AI capacity, the report assesses Namibia's ability to adopt, develop, and regulate AI responsibly across multiple dimensions. By undertaking this process, Namibia has set a baseline for AI readiness and demonstrated the political will to shape its digital future through responsible governance and inclusive innovation. The report provides a critical roadmap for the country's AI development.

Egypt

Egypt further reinforced its ambition to lead in AI governance by launching its National AI Readiness Assessment Report on September 9, 2025, developed in partnership with UNESCO's Regional Office in Egypt and Sudan and financed by the European Union[5]. Presented by the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, the report comprehensively evaluates Egypt's institutional, technological, and policy capacity to integrate AI in a sustainable and inclusively manner. Beyond diagnosis, it lays a roadmap for strengthening governance frameworks, accelerating innovation, and positioning Egypt as a regional leader in AI adoption.

AI Regulations in Education

Governments and regional bodies across Africa have actively participated in developing sector-specific regulations to harness the potential of AI in education while mitigating associated risks. These initiatives are designed to tailor AI integration to local needs, enhance learning outcomes, and address foundational challenges such as digital literacy and infrastructure.

In July 2025, the Tanzanian government began proactively integrating AI into its education system[6] through a national framework of the broader National Digital Education Strategy 2024/25 to 2029/30[7]. The government aims to revolutionize how pupils learn and teachers impart knowledge by using AI for personalized learning, lesson planning, and student performance analysis. The framework also emphasizes capacity building, with training programs being rolled out for secondary school teachers to equip them with the skills necessary to utilize AI tools, such as adaptive learning and virtual tutors. While the policy is forward-looking, challenges remain, including infrastructure gaps and a significant urban-rural digital divide. Nevertheless, the framework's focus on digital ethics, privacy, and safety ensures that the technology is implemented responsibly and aligns with national data protection regulations.

The Zambian Ministry of Education underscored the urgent need for a national framework to regulate the use of generative AI in higher education and TVET institutions, initiating a drafting workshop in July 2025[8]. The effort is part of the country's broader National AI Strategy (2024-2026)[9], which aims to strike a balance between innovation and ethical considerations.

Discussions have focused on addressing the misuse of AI tools, such as over-reliance and academic dishonesty, while exploring how AI can enhance, rather than replace, human learning and understanding. A key aspect of Zambia's approach is the emphasis on developing localized AI models that can understand indigenous languages, contributing to national AI sovereignty. Public-private partnerships are also crucial, with plans to deliver over 5,000 computers and upgrade network infrastructure to improve access to digital tools.

Lastly, in July 2025, the ECOWAS Parliament took a landmark step to craft a unified legal framework for AI in education as part of its Digital Strategy 2024–2029[10]. This initiative responds to the need for a coordinated approach to digital governance across West Africa. The framework aims to establish safeguards that protect students and educators while harnessing AI's potential to enhance learning. Discussions have highlighted the need to move beyond consuming foreign technology to creating homegrown solutions rooted in African values. The proposed pact includes six key pillars: developing shared digital educational resources in African languages, establishing a regional ethical charter on AI, and creating an innovation fund to support local EdTech. This effort is supported by a World Bank program, signalling a strong regional commitment to bridging the digital divide and improving youth employability.

Application of AI Regulation in education and its Implications

Looking at early adopters, sector-specific regulation in education primarily targeted academic integrity in higher education institutions. In Kenya, universities swiftly introduced internal, binding policies to govern Generative AI (GenAI) use. For instance, Aga Khan University (AKU) provisionally approved guidelines mandating students to explicitly disclose and cite any AI-assisted content[11]. This was reinforced by system-wide rules, supported by institutions like the University of Nairobi, which adopted clear plagiarism thresholds[12]. The mandatory enforcement of these policies in university systems led to a demonstrable reduction in student misuse of GenAI, confirming the preventative power of targeted regulation[13].

Another early mover was Mauritius, where regulation focused on holistic integration and governance in tertiary education. The Higher Education Commission (HEC), supported by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in May 2025, developed national policy guidelines for its six public higher education institutions to provide a clear framework for AI use, academic integrity, and capacity building[14]. This move reinforced specific institutional rules that had already been put in place by universities, such as the University of Mauritius (UoM), which issued regulations explicitly treating the unwarranted and excessive use of Chat GPT as a form of academic dishonesty and requiring mandatory originality checks in May 2024[15]. By establishing these clear standards, the regulatory frameworks validated institutional authority over digital tools, ensuring that AI adoption was built on a foundation of ethical, transparent, and human-centered principles.

Proposed AI Strategies

In early July, Uganda announced that it had embarked on developing its first National AI Policy, signaling a new phase in the country's digital transformation agenda[16]. Led by the Ministry of ICT, the draft policy aims to strike a balance between promoting innovation and safeguarding citizens' rights, particularly in terms of data privacy. By creating a clear regulatory framework, Uganda aims to foster responsible AI adoption that can contribute to national development while ensuring alignment with global best practices. The initiative reflects a growing recognition that, without deliberate regulation, the risks of AI, ranging from privacy breaches to exclusion, could outweigh its potential benefits. Uganda's move positions it among the growing number of African states developing foundational policies to guide the ethical integration of AI.

Zimbabwe, meanwhile, has accelerated its journey toward a national AI strategy with crucial backing from UNESCO in July 2025[17]. The draft is approaching completion, with the first national consultative meeting, bringing together local AI experts, having taken place in August 2025. Broader public consultations will follow, ensuring citizen voices are included in shaping the country's AI future. By anchoring the process in inclusivity and international collaboration, Zimbabwe is demonstrating a commitment to global standards and local realities, aiming to craft a strategy that ensures AI adoption drives equitable growth and innovation.

Establishment of AI Taskforces, Councils, and Advisory Groups.

Existing AI Taskforces

Country	Task Force/ Council	Year
Mauritius	Mauritius Working Group on AI	2018
	Mauritius AI Council	2022
Egypt	Arab AI Working Group	2019
	African Working Group on AI	2019
	National Council for AI(NCAI)	2019
Algeria	National Scientific Council for AI	2023
Uganda	Uganda AI Task Force	2024
Africa	AU 9-Member Advisory Group on AI	2024
	Africa AI Council	2025

AI Taskforces, Councils, and Advisory Groups in Q3 2025

Kenya – Techplomacy Connective

In July 2025, Kenya launched the TechPlomacy Connective, a pioneering platform to align digital innovation with diplomacy, ethics, and inclusive development[18]. Unveiled by the Prime Cabinet Secretary, the initiative positions Nairobi as a central hub for global technology diplomacy. The Connective seeks to translate Kenya's high digital engagement into meaningful outcomes by uniting governments, innovators, academia, and civil society to co-create inclusive digital futures. With international support, such as Belgium's decision to recruit an AI specialist at its Nairobi embassy and praise from the UN Tech Envoy, Kenya signalled its ambition to guide global conversations on ethical AI governance, equitable innovation, and responsible technology deployment.

South Africa - National AI Stakeholder Forum

In August, South Africa officially launched the National AI Stakeholder Forum, a cornerstone of its Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework and the Digital Economy Master Plan[19]. Led by the Deputy Minister, the Forum brings together researchers, technologists, ethicists, private sector leaders, and policymakers to build an inclusive, ethical, and sustainable AI ecosystem. The platform prioritizes collaboration over mere coordination, encouraging stakeholders to collectively shape the trajectory of AI in South Africa. With a strong emphasis on trust, data equity, and representation, the Forum highlights South Africa's vision of AI as a transformative, general-purpose technology that must be developed in ways that serve the needs of youth, women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented communities.

Egypt - Arab AI Council Proposal

Later in August, Egypt advanced its regional leadership role by proposing the creation of the Arab Council of Ministers for Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies[20]. The proposal aims to unify Arab policies, strengthen regional cooperation, and elevate the Arab League's role in global AI governance. Building on the adoption of a Unified Arab AI Strategy and ethics charter earlier in the year, the council would provide an institutional framework for collective awareness, labor market adaptation, and coordinated policymaking.

Somalia - AI and Space Tech Regulatory Cooperation

In September 2025, Somalia entered the AI governance ecosystem through bilateral talks with Saudi Arabia at the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-25)[21]. Led by the Director General of Somalia's National Communications Authority and the Governor of Saudi Arabia's Communications, Space and Technology Commission, the dialogue focused on strengthening regulatory frameworks for artificial intelligence and space technologies. The discussions emphasized the importance of responsible innovation, ethical use, and strategies to safeguard national and regional security while unlocking opportunities for economic growth. For Somalia, this milestone represents a deliberate step toward embedding itself in international AI governance and building regulatory capacity through partnerships.

Data Protection as a Cornerstone of AI Regulation in Africa

Why Data Protection Matters for AI

Across Africa, data protection frameworks are becoming a foundational layer of AI governance. Currently, 40 countries have enacted data protection laws, with 34 establishing enforcement authorities[22]. These Data Protection Authorities (DPAs) play a pivotal role in ensuring that AI systems operate responsibly by overseeing data processing, safeguarding individual rights, and setting standards for lawful and ethical innovation. Their interventions have already significantly shaped the AI landscape.

For example, in Senegal, the Commission de Protection des Données Personnelles (CDP) rejected a company's attempt to use facial recognition to monitor employees in 2023[23], highlighting significant privacy risks in the workplace. Senegal's CDP has also issued advisories to the financial sector, urging banks and fintech firms to integrate data protection safeguards into their use of AI and digital platforms. In Kenya, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODPC) suspended Worldcoin's operations in 2023[24], raising concerns over its biometric iris-scanning technology, which combined blockchain with AI, underscoring the risks associated with emerging digital ID systems.

Some DPAs have published guidance and frameworks tailored to AI use. For instance, the Mauritius Data Protection Commission developed a Guide on Data Protection for Health Data and Artificial Intelligence Solutions[25] , providing crucial advice on handling sensitive health data in AI-driven healthcare innovations. Morocco has also published formal opinions on the use of facial recognition[26]. At the same time, Nigeria's DPA issued directives under its Data Protection Act requiring deployers of AI to conduct Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) and benchmark their practices against international norms such as the UN Resolution on AI[27].

The involvement of DPAs across Africa highlights their dual role as guardians of privacy and emerging regulators of AI. By banning risky technologies, publishing guidance, and consulting the public, they proactively shape the adoption of AI. This approach aligns with global practice, where data protection authorities have become key players in AI regulation. It also underscores a critical point: data protection is not just a parallel legal concern, but the backbone of trustworthy and inclusive AI adoption across Africa.

Q3 2025 Initiatives Around Data Protection and Data Privacy

In the third quarter of 2025, Africa experienced a series of developments that linked data governance and AI regulation, reflecting the continent's growing commitment to building digital trust, advancing data sovereignty, and establishing ethical foundations for emerging technologies. These initiatives, spanning continental bodies, regional blocs, and national-level programs, demonstrate a deliberate effort to harmonize data protection frameworks with the realities of AI adoption and digital transformation.

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) Emphasis on Data Sovereignty and Ethical AI

At the 5th Ordinary Session of the 6th Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in Midrand, South Africa, in July 2025[28], legislators, academics, and technology experts placed data sovereignty, AI governance, and responsible digital innovation at the center of Africa's transformation agenda. Framed against the risk of the continent becoming a digital colony, discussions underscored the urgency of African-led approaches to AI regulation and data governance to harness the Fourth Industrial Revolution for inclusive development fully. Lawmakers called on member states to develop model laws on AI, privacy, and data protection, aligned with Agenda 2063[29] and anchored in the domestication of the Malabo Convention[30].

Scholars also warned of the dangers of digital extractivism, noting that much of Africa's data is exported for commercial use in Europe, the US, and China, leaving African citizens with little control over their digital resources. They argued that controlling data is essential for regulating AI, urging the adoption of decentralized and community-driven data systems as a pathway to true African digital sovereignty.

Experts also emphasized that AI models built on non-African datasets risk embedding biases and excluding local realities, particularly in healthcare and education. They called for frameworks that keep African data within the continent, alongside investments in local AI talent and adoption of FAIR Data principles to make data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable for African contexts.

Concrete case studies, such as AgridroneAfrica's work in utilizing drones and AI for precision agriculture, highlight the opportunities of African-led AI, localized solutions that boost yields, improve food security, and safeguard digital sovereignty by ensuring agricultural data is stored and processed locally. The session ultimately reaffirmed that AI in Africa must be people-centered, grounded in local cultures and languages, and steered through harmonized continental policies that ensure equitable benefits across all regions. By aligning AI governance with the AU's Agenda 2063 vision of "The Africa We Want," the Pan-African Parliament advanced the concept of transforming Artificial Intelligence into African Intelligence. This framework prioritizes ethics, sovereignty, and inclusive growth.

Egypt's National Open Data Policy.

Egypt also took a landmark step in advancing responsible digital transformation by adopting its first National Open Data Policy, in September 2025[31], a comprehensive framework designed to govern the access, sharing, and reuse of public data. Adopted in August 2025 by the National Council for Artificial Intelligence (NCAI), chaired by the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, the policy establishes the country's first cohesive set of principles for ensuring non-sensitive government data is made accessible in line with both international standards and Egypt's national development priorities.

It serves as a transitional instrument pending the enactment of a more permanent data governance law, but already sets out robust mechanisms for transparency, accountability, and citizen trust.

Central to the policy is the principle of being open by default, ensuring that government-held datasets are made public unless legally restricted, while promoting availability in machine-readable formats to enable reuse across academia, civil society, and the private sector. By institutionalizing these practices, Egypt aims to foster innovation, stimulate its growing digital economy, and enable data-driven policymaking aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the national digital transformation agenda.

The policy also anticipates the establishment of a Data Governance Authority (EDGA), which will eventually take over from the NCAI to ensure compliance and harmonization across government agencies. In the meantime, specialized open data officers within each ministry are tasked with identifying and publishing datasets, while a joint access committee ensures their alignment with national standards. Notably, the policy recognizes that data governance is foundational for AI governance. By providing the availability, quality, and reliability of open datasets, Egypt is laying the groundwork for AI models and applications that are contextually relevant, trustworthy, and ethically aligned. In this sense, the policy not only improves transparency and service delivery but also provides the data infrastructure necessary for AI innovation, empowering researchers, entrepreneurs, and developers to build locally relevant AI solutions in sectors such as healthcare, urban planning, and public services.

Harmonization of health data governance frameworks – Africa CDC

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) also took a landmark step toward strengthening health data governance across the continent by announcing the development of a Continental Health Data Governance Framework. Unveiled at the 2025 Africa Health ExCon, in July 2025[32], in Cairo, the framework will be tabled for adoption at the African Union Summit in 2026 and is designed to harmonize policies, procedures, and regulations around the collection, protection, and use of health data.

At its core, the initiative recognizes that in the era of AI, health data is no longer a passive by-product of health systems but a strategic asset that can drive precision public health, inform policy, predict outbreaks, and close equity gaps. Yet, as officials noted, without robust governance, health data risks becoming a liability vulnerable to misuse and mistrust. The framework will therefore anchor health data governance in principles of equity, transparency, rights protection, and data sovereignty while enabling trusted cross-border data flows essential for disease surveillance and continental collaboration.

In shaping this framework, Africa CDC is building on a broad ecosystem of existing African Union strategies, including the AU Data Policy Framework[33], the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030)[34], the AU Continental AI Strategy (2024–2030)[35], and Africa CDC's own Digital Transformation Strategy (2023)[36]. It also complements the agency's Health Data Governance Flagship Initiative, launched in (2023)[37], which supports Member States in strengthening national laws and technical capacity. By promoting harmonized governance, Africa CDC aims to ensure the ethical and secure use of health data and create an enabling environment for AI-driven health innovation, from predictive modelling and digital epidemiology to real-time diagnostics and resilient health systems. This marks a turning point in Africa's digital health journey: positioning health data as a pillar of resilience, innovation, and trust while setting a global precedent for responsible governance in the AI era.

Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC) and Mastercard Foundation Collaboration on Data Privacy

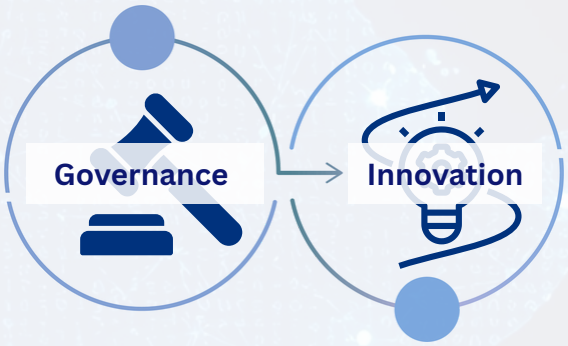
In September 2025, The Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC) partnered with MasterCard to scale professional capacity in data governance through the company's Virtual Privacy Academy (VPA)[38]. Through the pertnership, MasterCard's Nigerian employees will be enrolled in the program, which goes beyond general awareness to provide practical training in personal data protection, lawful processing, cybersecurity hygiene, and emerging regulatory obligations.

This collaboration positions privacy as a cornerstone of Nigeria's digital rights agenda while reflecting MasterCard's broader commitment to ethical data stewardship across Africa's rapidly growing digital economy. By embedding privacy into daily business practice, the partnership reinforces digital trust. It sets a precedent for how private sector actors can support national regulatory ecosystems in building a culture of compliance.

The initiative comes at a critical moment as Nigeria faces rising risks of data breaches and cyber incidents, underscoring the urgent need for workforce-level capacity building. According to the NDPC CEO, the VPA is relevant for financial services and can be extended across sectors, creating a ripple effect of strengthened compliance and enhanced public trust. In line with this, MasterCard has pledged to expand access to the program beyond its employees to include vendors and suppliers, ensuring a broader ecosystem of partners is aligned with Nigeria's regulatory standards. This move reflects a forward-looking approach where private sector innovation and regulatory leadership converge, offering a model that could be replicated across Africa to foster stronger safeguards for data protection while enabling the growth of the continent's digital economy.

The Intersection of Governance and The African Innovation Ecosystem

Well-designed governance frameworks serve as a powerful enabler of innovation, creating a stable, transparent, and trustworthy environment that encourages investment, collaboration, and responsible technology development[39]. Rather than acting as a roadblock, strategic regulations can accelerate progress, as seen in global examples such as Singapore's regulatory sandboxes[40] [41] [42] [43], which allow for the rapid testing of new technologies, or the European Union's GDPR[44], which has spurred innovation in privacy-enhancing tools by establishing a common data protection standard.



Similarly, China's top-down, strategic investment in AI[45] has positioned it as a global leader by directing capital and talent toward a national priority. In the African context, this relationship is particularly critical, as initiatives like the African Union's Continental AI Strategy and national policies are not just about control, but about building a foundation of public trust and ensuring that AI innovation addresses the continent's unique developmental challenges, thereby serving as a tool for inclusive economic growth rather than a source of inequality.

Strategic Measures by African Governments in Q3 to Promote Innovation

1. Fostering Enabling Environments

African nations are strategically creating supportive regulatory and collaborative environments to accelerate innovation. A key example is the implementation of a regulatory sandbox in Malawi, as exemplified by the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) in August 2025[46].

This initiative provides a controlled, time-bound testing ground where innovators can trial emerging technologies, such as AI and the Internet of Things (IoT), under regulatory oversight, thereby reducing traditional delays and fast-tracking solutions to market.

Beyond regulation, governments are fostering collaboration through partnerships, such as the Digital Africa Corridor launched by Nigeria and Cape Verde in September 2025[47], which aims to pool skills and build more inclusive digital ecosystems. Similarly, the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) established an AI Institute in July 2025[48] which showcases a commitment to leading responsible AI innovation and strengthening policy development through multi-stakeholder collaboration. These efforts demonstrate a shift toward agile, evidence-based governance that supports innovation while protecting consumers.

2. Investing in Digital Infrastructure

Recognizing that robust infrastructure is the foundation of a thriving digital economy, African governments are investing to ensure local innovators have the necessary tools to develop complex AI solutions. Gabon's project to build a National Data Center[49] is a prime example of a state-led effort to create secure, independent digital infrastructure. This initiative, launched in July 2025, uniquely links infrastructure with human capital development by providing free training to young Gabonese citizens. In South Africa, the launch of a Sovereign AI Cloud by Touchnet and Zadara in July[50] delivers a dedicated, high-performance computing platform for local enterprises. This infrastructure supports compute-intensive AI workloads, such as machine learning and big data analytics, reinforcing data sovereignty and enabling innovation with reduced latency.

3. Investing in Human Capital and Education

A key strategy for sustaining innovation is the development of a skilled local workforce. In Q3, several African countries implemented targeted programs to build AI capacity and digital literacy from the ground up, often through public–private partnerships. For instance, in September, Kenya launched the Qubit Hub Research Centre[51], a significant step toward advancing AI research and development by providing essential infrastructure for innovators.

In July, the Nigerian Federal Government, in collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS), initiated a program to offer free digital skills training to students and educators[52]. Around the same time, Microsoft and Google designated Kenya and South Africa as priority countries for their AI skilling programs[53].

Additional training initiatives launched in August demonstrate this momentum: Ghana rolled out a program to train public sector workers and ministers[54], Cameroon introduced an initiative to equip indigenous communities with AI skills[55], and Senegal organized workshops for lawmakers focused on digital transformation and data protection[56]. In July, partnerships also played a key role in fostering knowledge transfer and research, notably the agreement between UNESCO and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P)[57], which aims to advance Africa-centered development agendas by integrating education, science, technology, and cultural heritage, with a strong emphasis on building local AI expertise. Collectively, these efforts highlight a growing recognition across the continent that empowering people with digital skills is essential for driving long-term, inclusive innovation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the third quarter of 2025 underscored a pivotal reality for Africa: governance is becoming a central enabler of innovation in AI and data-driven transformation. Across the continent, governments, regional blocs, and continental institutions are moving from aspirational visions to concrete regulatory, institutional, and infrastructural frameworks. From Cameroon's landmark National AI Strategy to UNESCO-supported Readiness Assessment Reports in Tanzania, Namibia, and Egypt, Q3 illustrated how regulation, capacity building, and ethical guardrails converge into a coherent African approach to AI. These developments reveal a deliberate shift in which regulation is not stifling progress, but instead creating the trust, stability, and clarity necessary for innovators, businesses, and citizens to thrive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

At the same time, the quarter highlighted the critical role of data governance as the backbone of AI regulation. Initiatives such as Egypt's National Open Data Policy, the Africa CDC's work on harmonized health data governance, and Nigeria's partnership with MasterCard on privacy training underscore that AI adoption risks reinforcing inequities and mistrust without robust data frameworks in place. By investing in data sovereignty, interoperability, and ethical safeguards, African governments can ensure that AI ecosystems remain people-centered and aligned with the continent's socio-economic priorities. Complementing this, new councils, forums, and task forces have been launched in Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, and Somalia, reinforcing the vital role of institutional mechanisms in ensuring inclusivity, regional cooperation, and global engagement in AI governance.

Looking ahead to Q4 2025, momentum is expected to accelerate as countries such as Zimbabwe and Uganda finalize their national AI strategies, South Africa prepares to unveil its AI policy framework, and regional bodies advance sector-specific regulations.

These upcoming developments will consolidate the regulatory progress seen in Q3 and operationalize it through targeted industry codes, education initiatives, and citizen-focused safeguards. In this sense, Q3 demonstrated that Africa is not merely catching up with global AI governance debates, but is actively shaping a model of its own —one rooted in local realities, yet globally relevant in its vision of turning AI into African Intelligence.

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