AFRICA AI GOVERNANCE INDEX

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Africa AI Governance Index (AAIGI)
Inaugural Report · 2026 Edition

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Sub-regional groupings follow the geographic classification of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The designations employed and the presentation of material in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any country or territory.

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AAIGI	Africa AI Governance Index (Lawyers Hub)
AfDB	African Development Bank
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ARCAI	African Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence
AU	African Union
BIUST	Botswana International University of Science and Technology
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CTN-IA	National Technical Committee on AI (Gabon)
DFI	Development Finance Institution
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAIR	Fairness, Accountability, Inclusiveness, and Responsibility
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPU	Graphics Processing Unit
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MW	Megawatt
NLP	Natural Language Processing
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
R&D	Research and Development

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
REC	Regional Economic Community
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SNIA	Stratégie Nationale de l'Intelligence Artificielle (Cameroon)
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organization

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We thank Smart Africa for its ongoing work to advance digital regional integration across the continent, work that this Index draws on and seeks to reinforce. We are also grateful to Prateek Sibal of UNESCO for offering feedback on this work and for sharing UNESCO's resources, in particular the country Readiness Assessment Methodology, which informed the assessment framework and the country evidence base.

This project reflects our shared belief in the importance of an African-designed, African-researched future for Artificial Intelligence.

Report Highlights

54 African States Assessed

80 Indicators Per State

4,320 Scored Observations

8 Weighted Pillars

Implementation decoupling is universal. Every sub-region scores highest on Strategy & Vision and lowest on Implementation & Impact. Across all 54 assessed states, strategy diffusion consistently outpaces the creation of enforceable laws, ring-fenced budgets, and measurable oversight mechanisms [1].

The continent sits in the early-development band. On the Index's 0–4 scale, sub-regional averages range from 1.56 (North Africa) and 1.49 (Southern Africa) to 1.07 (Central Africa), with East Africa (1.27) and West Africa (1.25) in between. No sub-region has yet crossed the midpoint of the maturity scale [1].

Infrastructure concentration persists. Africa's digital foundations remain fragile. The continent holds under 1% of global data-centre capacity while hosting 18% of the world's population, and this limited capacity is heavily concentrated in a handful of markets, including South Africa, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, and Morocco [14, 15].

Talent scarcity is a structural constraint. Africa accounts for an estimated 3% of the world's AI talent. Persistent brain drain and thin specialised curricula keep Human Capital the weakest, or near-weakest, of the four foundational pillars in every sub-region, constraining both innovation and regulatory capability [1, 16].

Diaspora talent is a strategic reserve. An estimated 70,000 skilled professionals leave Africa each year, and AI and machine-learning specialists command the highest international rates, making them the likeliest to be recruited abroad or into remote roles serving foreign firms [39, 40]. Structured diaspora engagement, through return incentives, joint appointments, and co-investment channels, would convert emigration into circulation and recover expertise the continent has already paid to train.

Report Highlights

Foreign dependence cuts both ways. The continent remains structurally dependent on foreign hyperscalers for cloud, GPUs, and subsea cables, expanding technological capacity while deepening risks to data sovereignty and economic autonomy [15].

A regulatory patchwork governs AI. While over 70% of assessed countries have enacted data protection laws, dedicated and enforceable AI legislation remains rare; most states rely on indirect cybersecurity or digital codes that lack the specific mandates (e.g., algorithmic impact assessments) required to oversee advanced AI systems [1].

Innovation is outrunning safety. The innovation ecosystem has attracted an estimated US$1.25 billion in AI venture capital since 2019, but over 80% of this capital is concentrated in just four economies, and commercial growth is outpacing any operational AI safety infrastructure [17].

Continental aspirations outpace domestic law. Initiatives such as the AU Continental AI Strategy, the Africa Declaration on AI adopted in Kigali, and the EAC's 2026 ministerial Declaration on AI provide strong political momentum, yet a systemic disconnect persists between these high-level commitments and domestic legislative operationalisation [2, 4, 8].

The AI workforce is a governance blind spot. African data labellers, content moderators, and platform workers train the world's AI systems under algorithmic management, yet the Index finds requirements for algorithmic impact assessment, bias audits, and AI labour-transition policy near the floor of the scale continent-wide, and no assessed national AI strategy addresses the conditions of this work. ILO Convention No. 193, adopted in June 2026, now offers the binding standard that African ratification could turn into protection [1, 34].

The language and inclusion deficit is acute. By commonly cited estimates, barely 0.02% of online content is available in African languages, severely limiting the inclusivity and accessibility of future AI systems and keeping Ethics & Inclusion among the least developed pillars continent-wide [18].

Regional Pathways to Sovereignty

Sub-regional averages, not country ranks, carry the analytical weight. The Index publishes every country's composite score with its interpretation attached, but composite differences smaller than roughly 0.1 are not meaningful distinctions, and the rubric rewards adopted formal instruments over ecosystem size or reputation; a rank order measures formalisation, not capability [1]. The Index's central empirical finding, the uniform inversion between Strategy & Vision and Implementation & Impact in every sub-region, is a shared structural condition, not a national failing, and a 54-state league table obscures it.

The sub-region is the minimum viable sovereignty unit. Sovereignty over compute, data, and rules is not attainable at national scale for most of the continent. Only a handful of states could plausibly pursue it alone, and none can sustain it against the economics of foreign hyperscalers [15]. Sub-regional averages are not a diplomatic softening of rankings; they describe the level at which the gap between ambition and delivery can be closed, and each sub-region holds a distinct route.

North Africa (1.56) holds a production pathway. Morocco's sovereign compute buildout exceeding 900MW combined and Egypt's data-centre growth position the sub-region as the continent's only potential net compute exporter, with Mauritania already planned as a recipient of cross-border compute [1]. The risk is that the buildout stays national: no binding Arab Maghreb Union AI framework and no shared data-protection standard connect the seven states, reproducing hyperscaler dependency inside the sub-region.

West Africa (1.25) holds a legal pathway. The sub-region holds the continent's only binding regional data instrument, the ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Personal Data Protection [20], and the highest Regional Integration average in the Index (1.51). Converting that precedent into a binding ECOWAS AI protocol would make the bloc a rule-maker fifteen states deep; its Implementation & Impact average of 0.65, the lowest recorded anywhere in the Index, is the risk that regional text sits over hollow national enforcement [1].

East Africa (1.27) holds an institutional pathway, the furthest advanced. The EAC ministers' 2026 Declaration on Artificial Intelligence and Regional AI Technologies Fund [8], the EAC AI Alliance [9], and the regional EAC AI Strategy (2026–2031) [1] amount to pooled sovereignty by treaty. Bilateral MoUs with foreign partners operating outside regional oversight are the visible risk, exposing citizen data sovereignty and technological sovereignty to systemic leakage.

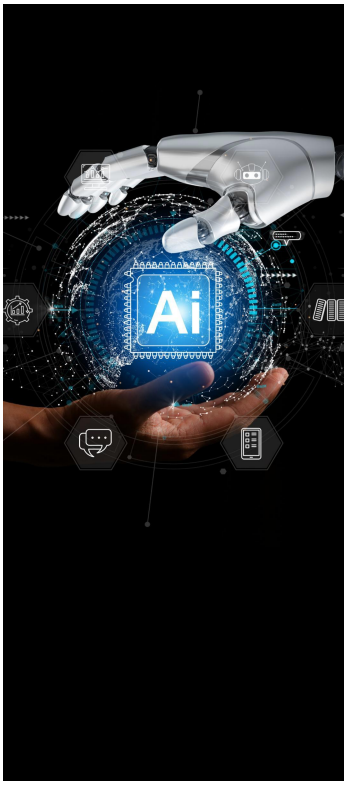
Regional Pathways to Sovereignty

Central Africa (1.07) pools by necessity. No state in the sub-region has scale, so shared assets, ARCAI in Brazzaville [30], the Republic of the Congo's sovereign data centres, and Gabon's supervisory architecture [1], are the only sovereignty infrastructure available. With ECCAS providing minimal AI-specific coordination, the pathway currently routes through UN-system channels, itself a soft dependency.

Southern Africa (1.49) faces harmonisation or fragmentation. The sub-region records the continent's highest averages on Infrastructure & Data (1.72) and Ethics & Inclusion (1.48) [1], but no binding SADC AI framework exists [21, 22], and Angola's extraterritorial draft shows legislative divergence is already underway. A SADC model AI law is the cheapest sovereignty intervention available on the continent, because every component already exists.

Every pathway breaks at the same link, and the continental layer supplies the missing leverage. No REC framework has yet been converted into national implementing legislation at scale; repairing that transmission mechanism, not drafting further strategies, is the binding task for the remainder of Phase 1 [1]. The continental layer then adds what sub-regions cannot generate alone: bargaining power. The continent supplies roughly 70% of mined cobalt and around 30% of global critical-mineral reserves while depending on discretionary access to compute; minerals-for-compute bargaining works only as a bloc, and deals concluded state by state concede the leverage [41, 42].

1. Introduction



1. Purpose and Scope

Artificial intelligence is increasingly central to how African states will pursue the Sustainable Development Goals, deliver public services, and compete in the global digital economy. For the purposes of this report, AI governance refers to the full set of strategies, laws, institutions, infrastructure, skills, and accountability mechanisms through which states direct the development and use of AI systems. The Africa AI Governance Index (AAIGI) is an inaugural, Africa-designed continental benchmark for measuring, comparing, and strengthening that governance across all 54 African states. Its purpose is to map each nation's governance journey, from the total absence of policy to advanced, outcome-producing frameworks, without ranking countries against a distant global frontier. The Index evaluates the entire governance value chain, spanning the strategies that set direction, the laws that regulate, the infrastructure that enables, the skills that sustain, the ethical safeguards that protect, and the regional cooperation that unites the continent. By transforming a fragmented policy landscape into comparable, evidence-based data, the AAIGI equips governments, researchers, and civil society with a shared tool to track progress and pinpoint where reform and investment are needed most.

2. Why an Africa-Designed, Africa-Researched Index Matters

Global AI governance indices typically cater to high-income economies, often treating Africa as a data gap. The AAIGI takes the opposite approach. It is designed and researched by African experts, most working within their home countries, and is firmly grounded in continental frameworks, including the AU's Continental AI Strategy [2], the Malabo Convention [5], and the Africa Declaration on AI adopted in Kigali [4]. Rather than treating African ethical traditions such as Ubuntu as secondary considerations, the AAIGI makes them core evaluation criteria. Local authorship strengthens contextual validity, because evidence is gathered and interpreted by researchers who understand the domestic setting. The credibility of the resulting scores rests, in turn, on the transparent coding rules, source hierarchy, quality assurance, and review processes described in Appendix A.

1.3 The Eight Pillars and Sub-regional Structure

The AAIGI assesses each country across eight pillars: Strategy & Vision; Governance & Regulation; Infrastructure & Data; Human Capital; Innovation & Ecosystem; Ethics & Inclusion; Regional Integration; and Implementation & Impact. The first four pillars carry a 15% weight each and the latter four 10% each, reflecting the foundational role of strategy, law, infrastructure, and skills. The full rationale for this weighting, alongside indicator definitions and scoring rules, is set out in Appendix A.

The AAIGI Assessment Framework

8 pillars - 10 indicators - 80 indicators per state - scored 0-4 against rubric anchors

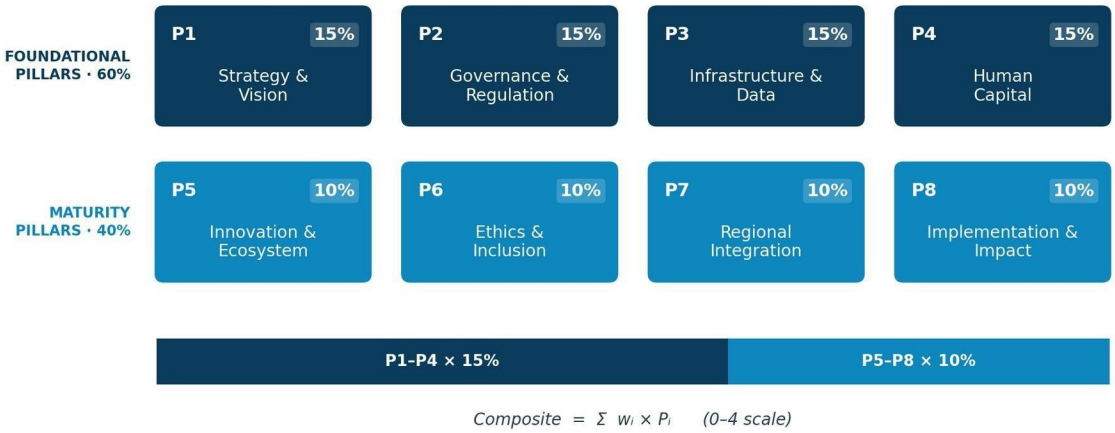


Figure 1.1: The AAIGI assessment framework. Eight pillars of ten indicators each, scored 0–4, with the 60/40 pillar weighting used to compute the composite (Appendix A).

Countries are organised into five sub-regions, North, West, Central, East, and Southern Africa, following the geographic designations of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). These sub-regional groupings are mutually exclusive geographic categories used for the purposes of this Index; they are not Regional Economic Community memberships, which overlap. Under this classification, Angola is assessed within Southern Africa only; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Madagascar, Comoros, and Seychelles within East Africa only; and Mauritania within North Africa only, even though several of these states also belong to SADC, ECCAS, or other RECs. Adopting a single, externally recognised classification avoids the ambiguity created by overlapping REC memberships, ensures every state is scored exactly once, and allows the Index to surface both national performance and sub-regional coordination.

1.4 How This Report Is Organised

The report places its highlights up front, opens key analytical chapters with chapter highlights, and sets out the full methodology in an appendix. Chapter 2 presents the continental overview, including the full continental table and a discussion of results that may surprise informed readers. Chapter 3 contains the five sub-regional chapters. Chapter 4 reports the Index's finding on Phase 1 alignment with the AU Continental AI Strategy. Chapters 5 to 7 draw the evidence together into cross-cutting themes, recommendations, and a conclusion. Appendix A sets out the methodology in full.

1.5 Methodology at a Glance

The Index is a structured expert-assessment index. Each of the 54 African states is scored on 80 indicators across the eight pillars, a total of 4,320 country-indicator observations, on a 0–4 maturity scale. Evidence was collected and verified up to 30 June 2026; developments after that date do not affect the 2026 scores, although they may be noted qualitatively where relevant. Evidence is drawn from official government documents, AU and REC instruments, UNESCO Readiness Assessment reports, and credible secondary sources, the Index relies on documented, publicly verifiable material rather than primary fieldwork, with a four-level quality assurance process and published country workbooks that make every score auditable [1]. The full methodology, including indicator definitions, scoring anchors, aggregation formulas, weighting rationale, missing-data treatment, quality assurance, sensitivity analysis, and limitations, is set out in Appendix A.

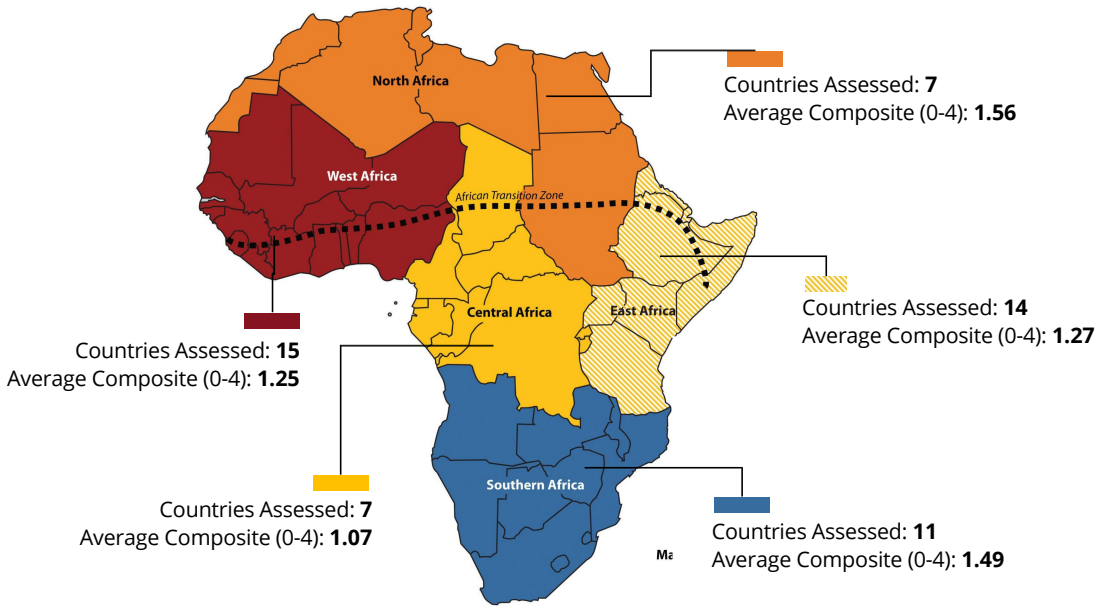
2. Continental Overview

Chapter Highlights

- **The implementation gap is structural.** Every sub-region scores highest on Strategy & Vision and lowest on Implementation & Impact, at roughly a third to half the level of strategy in each case.
- **The continent sits in the early-development band.** Sub-regional composite averages range from 1.56 (North Africa) to 1.07 (Central Africa) on the 0–4 scale; no sub-region crosses the midpoint.
- **Formal instruments outscore reputation.** The rubric rewards adopted strategies, laws, and documented mandates, which is why Rwanda leads the continental table and several high-profile ecosystems place lower than expected.

With all 54 African states assessed, the continental picture is clear. Africa enters the AI era with strong political momentum but a widening gap between ambition and delivery. On the Index's 0–4 scale, sub-regional average composites range from 1.56 in North Africa and 1.49 in Southern Africa, through 1.27 in East Africa and 1.25 in West Africa, to 1.07 in Central Africa [1]. No sub-region has crossed the midpoint of the maturity scale, placing the continent as a whole in the early-development band, a continent of adopted visions and drafted instruments that have not yet hardened into enforceable, funded, and measured governance systems.

Figure 2.1: Sub-regional comparison of composite averages. Because sub-regions contain different numbers of countries, averages, not cumulative totals, are used for cross-regional comparison.



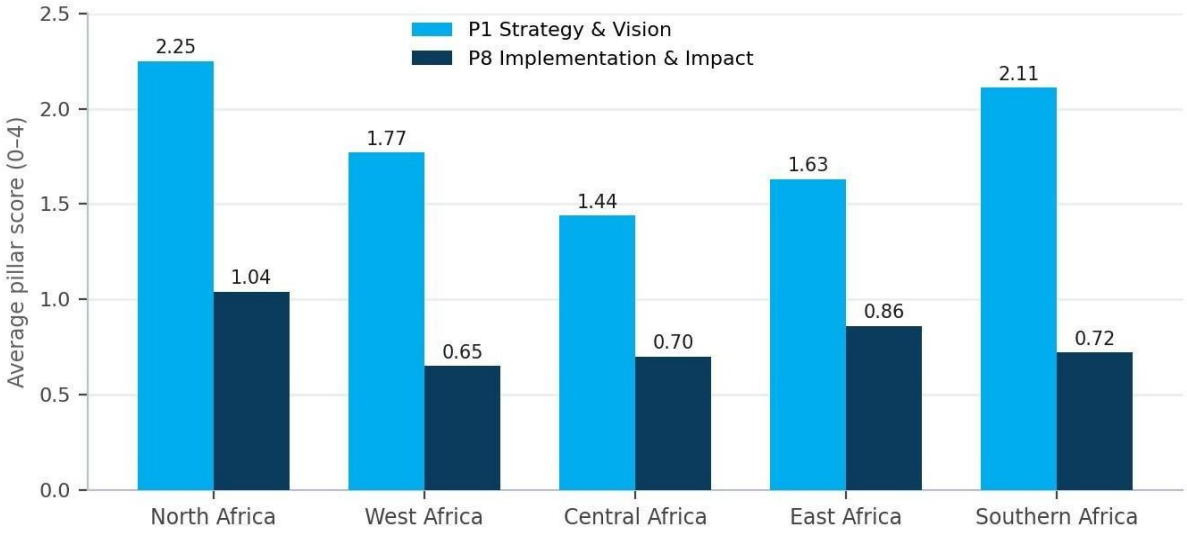


Figure 2.2: Strategy & Vision against Implementation & Impact, sub-regional pillar averages on the 0–4 scale. Data: sub-regional pillar tables, Chapter 3 [1].

The pillar profile is consistent across sub-regions. Strategy & Vision is the strongest pillar everywhere, with sub-regional averages between 1.44 and 2.25. Following the AU Executive Council's endorsement of the Continental AI Strategy in July 2024 [2], roughly 15 nations have adopted national AI frameworks, with approximately 24 more drafting policies or concluding readiness assessments [1, 3]. This momentum was reinforced by the 2025 Africa Declaration on AI adopted in Kigali, which proposed a US$60 billion investment target and called for the establishment of an Africa AI Council [4]. The test now is whether such commitments harden into funded institutions and measurable delivery, a conversion the Index finds has barely begun [1]. Implementation & Impact is, equally consistently, the weakest pillar, averaging between 0.65 and 1.04 across sub-regions, roughly a third to half the level of Strategy & Vision in each case. This symmetry is the single most important empirical finding of the inaugural Index. Within the assessed evidence, the implementation gap appears as a structural property of African AI governance today, cutting across countries and sub-regions.

Governance & Regulation sits in an intermediate band (1.18 to 1.54). Some 39 countries, over 70% of the continent, have enacted data protection laws [1], and the Malabo Convention entered into force in June 2023 upon receipt of its fifteenth ratification [5, 6], but dedicated, enforceable AI legislation remains a rarity. The deepest deficits lie in the enabling pillars. On Infrastructure & Data, Africa holds under 1% of global data-centre capacity while housing 18% of the world's population [14], with installed capacity heavily concentrated in a handful of top markets [15]. Human Capital is comparably thin, with an estimated 3% of the world's AI talent residing on the continent [16], and recent diffusion estimates suggesting no African nation has exceeded a 20% AI adoption rate [19]. Innovation & Ecosystem remains a relative bright spot in absolute terms, with an estimated US$1.25 billion in AI venture capital since 2019, but more

than 80% of that capital is concentrated in just four economies [17], and pillar averages (0.77 to 1.37) indicate most states have yet to build functioning ecosystems, let alone safety infrastructure. Ethics & Inclusion lags structurally, illustrated by estimates showing barely 0.02% of online content is available in African languages [18].

2.1 The Continental Table

The Index is diagnostic, and the sub-regional chapters publish every country's composite score; readers will assemble them into a single list regardless. The Index therefore publishes that list itself, with its interpretation attached, and keeps the framing. Composite differences smaller than roughly 0.1 should not be treated as meaningful distinctions; tied and near-tied states are best read as peers. The maturity bands are defined in Appendix A.9.

Table 2.1: Continental composite scores and maturity bands, all 54 assessed states (0–4 scale). Tied states share a rank. Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook (final, 2026) [1].

Rank	Country	Composite	Band
1	Rwanda	3.25	Established
2	Nigeria	2.81	Established
3	Benin	2.58	Established
4	Kenya	2.47	Developing
5	Morocco	2.38	Developing
6	Egypt	2.25	Developing
7	Ethiopia	2.22	Developing
8	Ghana	2.21	Developing
9	Mauritius	2.20	Developing
10	Tunisia	2.12	Developing
11	South Africa	2.10	Developing
11	Zimbabwe	2.10	Developing
13	Gabon	2.05	Developing
14	Côte d'Ivoire	1.90	Developing
15	Algeria	1.89	Developing
16	Angola	1.82	Developing
17	Republic of the Congo	1.73	Developing

Rank	Country	Composite	Band
18	Tanzania	1.66	Developing
19	Somalia	1.54	Developing
20	DR Congo	1.49	Nascent
21	Lesotho	1.48	Nascent
22	Uganda	1.29	Nascent
22	Zambia	1.29	Nascent
24	Cameroon	1.28	Nascent
25	Senegal	1.27	Nascent
26	Togo	1.26	Nascent
27	Burkina Faso	1.15	Nascent
28	Botswana	1.11	Nascent
28	Libya	1.11	Nascent
28	Malawi	1.11	Nascent
28	Namibia	1.11	Nascent
32	Eswatini	1.07	Nascent
33	Mozambique	0.96	Nascent
34	Djibouti	0.93	Nascent
34	São Tomé and Príncipe	0.93	Nascent
36	Mauritania	0.91	Nascent
37	Cabo Verde	0.90	Nascent
38	The Gambia	0.87	Nascent
39	Seychelles	0.83	Nascent
40	Guinea	0.81	Nascent
41	Burundi	0.80	Nascent
42	Chad	0.75	Nascent
43	Niger	0.70	Nascent
44	Sierra Leone	0.67	Nascent
45	Madagascar	0.66	Nascent
46	Mali	0.63	Nascent

Rank	Country	Composite	Band
47	Equatorial Guinea	0.53	Nascent
47	Guinea-Bissau	0.53	Nascent
49	Liberia	0.47	Minimal or absent
50	South Sudan	0.42	Minimal or absent
51	Sudan	0.23	Minimal or absent
52	Central African Republic	0.21	Minimal or absent
53	Comoros	0.18	Minimal or absent
54	Eritrea	0.08	Minimal or absent

Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook (final, 2026) [1].
Maturity bands (Appendix A.9): Minimal or absent Nascent Developing Established Advanced

Figure 2.3: Composite AI governance score by state, tile-grid policy map. Each state is one equal tile in approximate geographic position; colour steps are the published maturity bands (Appendix A.9). Values are the composites from the continental table. Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook (final, 2026) [1].

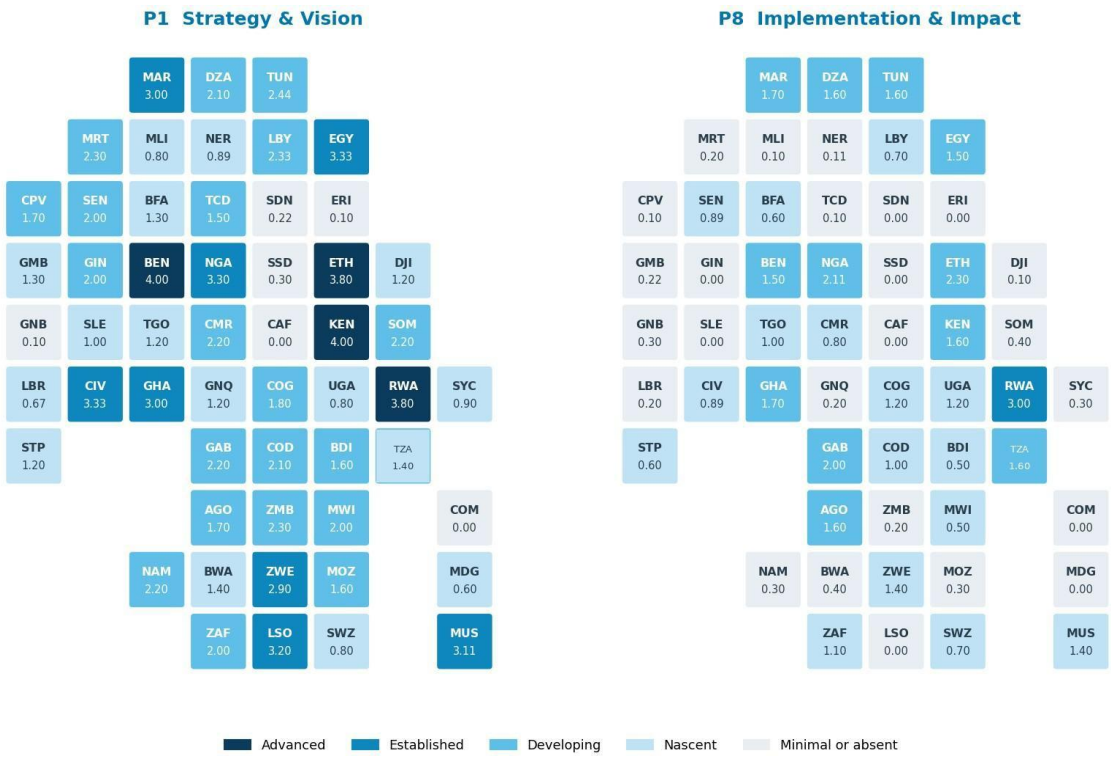


Figure 2.4: Strategy & Vision (P1) and Implementation & Impact (P8) by state, same layout and colour thresholds as Figure 2.3. The lightening of the map from left panel to right panel is the implementation gap made geographic. Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook (final, 2026) [1].

2.2 Results That May Surprise, and Why

Several placements in the continental table will strike informed readers as counterintuitive. They are, in most cases, direct products of the rubric's design choices, which are disclosed in Appendix A and applied uniformly. Three deserve explicit treatment.

Nigeria (2nd) and Benin (3rd) rank above Egypt, Mauritius, and South Africa. The rubric rewards adopted formal instruments, Malabo Convention ratification, and documented institutional mandates more heavily than ecosystem size, research pedigree, or global reputation. States that have moved fastest to formalise strategy and law since 2023 score above states whose strengths are concentrated in infrastructure and talent but whose AI-specific instruments remain drafts, withdrawn, or non-binding.

Somalia (19th) sits above Uganda and Senegal. The placement follows the same rubric logic set out above. Formally adopted instruments and documented institutional mandates convert into scored evidence, while larger but less formalised ecosystems score lower. The indicator-level evidence for Somalia, Uganda, and Senegal is documented in the country workbooks published alongside this report [1].

South Africa places 11th. Its April 2026 withdrawal of its draft National AI Policy, after fictitious, apparently AI-generated citations were found in its reference list [10, 11], removed its principal strategy instrument from the scored evidence base during the assessment window. Combined with the rubric's penalty for the absence of AI-specific law, this places the continent's largest AI market outside the top ten. The placement measures instruments, not capability.

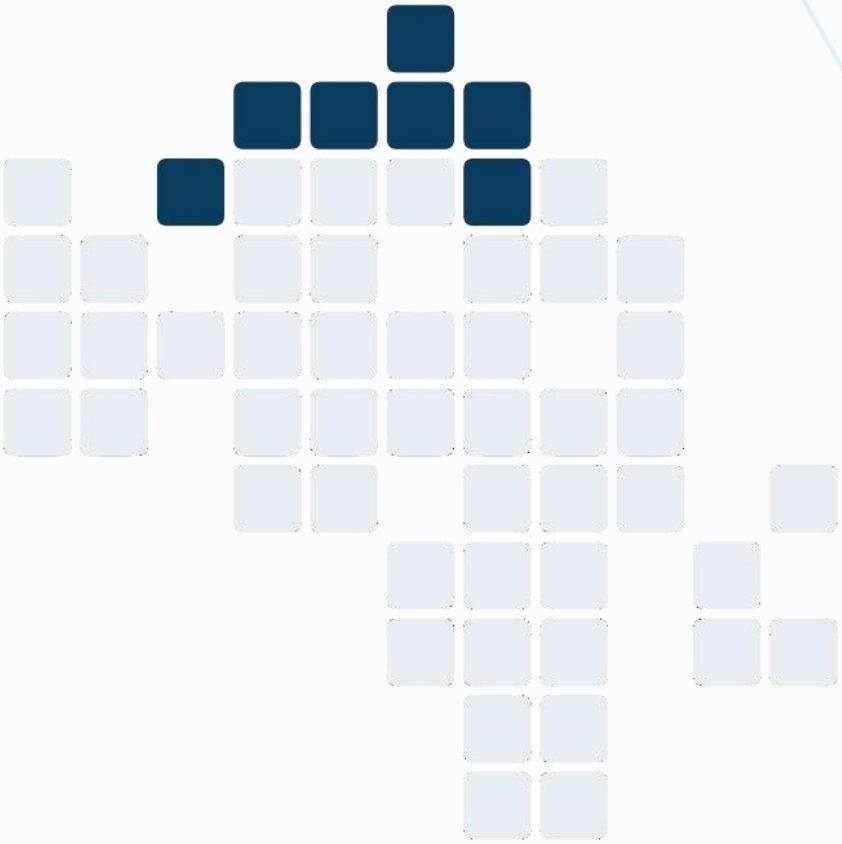
The Established band contains only three states. No state approaches the Advanced anchor, and only Rwanda scores highly on both strategy and implementation. Readers should resist reading the top of the table as a success story; it is the least incomplete portion of a continent-wide implementation deficit.

Four cross-cutting dynamics frame this picture and are analysed in depth in Chapter 5: the implementation gap between adopted strategy and operational governance; intensifying debates over data sovereignty as the majority of African data remains stored overseas and subject to foreign law; capacity constraints (talent, compute, quality local data, and reliable electricity), which the AU itself identifies as the primary bottlenecks [2]; and the complex dilemma of foreign infrastructure, through which American and Chinese hyperscalers simultaneously expand technological capacity and deepen external dependence.

3. Sub-regional Results

The five chapters that follow assess AI governance in each UNECA sub-region. Each chapter opens with a sub-regional overview, proceeds pillar by pillar, and closes with a country spotlight, key data points, and the sub-region's country composite scores. The analysis is deliberately regional in orientation, meaning that composite and pillar averages describe the sub-region as a whole, and individual countries appear where they illuminate broader patterns of strength or weakness. As set out in Section 1.3, the sub-regional groupings are mutually exclusive, and every state is scored in exactly one chapter, whatever its overlapping REC memberships.

Chapter 3.1



North Africa

7 states assessed · Average composite 1.56

3.1 North Africa

Sub-regional Overview

North Africa, comprising Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia under the UNECA classification, enters the AI era as Africa's most strategically active sub-region, and its highest scoring, with an average composite of 1.56 [1]. It is also among the most internally unequal. The sub-region's political economy splits along familiar lines. Egypt and Morocco function as middle-income, infrastructure-rich anchors with access to international capital, energy surpluses, and proximity to European and Gulf markets; Algeria and Tunisia combine strong public higher-education systems and deep engineering talent pools with state-led economic models that have been slower to convert research strength into commercial AI capacity; Libya, Mauritania, and Sudan sit at the other end of the spectrum, where state capacity itself, more than AI ambition, is the binding constraint. This unevenness largely mirrors decades of divergence in hydrocarbon revenue, institutional legacies, and post-independence state-building, but it is now being reproduced, and in some cases sharpened, in the digital domain, as compute, connectivity, and data infrastructure concentrate in the same coastal, capital-rich economies that led earlier industrial and telecom buildouts.

Table 3.1: North Africa, average pillar scores and weighted composite (0–4 scale), 7 countries assessed [1].

Pillar	Sub-regional average (0-4)
P1 Strategy & Vision	2.25
P2 Governance & Regulation	1.54
P3 Infrastructure & Data	1.59
P4 Human Capital	1.53
P5 Innovation & Ecosystem	1.37
P6 Ethics & Inclusion	1.33
P7 Regional Integration	1.47
P8 Implementation & Impact	1.04
Weighted composite	1.56

P1: Strategy & Vision

Strategy & Vision is North Africa's standout pillar, averaging 2.25, the highest pillar score recorded by any sub-region on any pillar. Six of the seven states have adopted or formally launched national AI strategies since 2019, making this Africa's most strategy-dense sub-region [1, 3]. Egypt's National AI Strategy 2025–2030 [31] and Morocco's Maroc IA 2030 set the most detailed, KPI-driven targets; Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania have each adopted multi-year roadmaps with defined pillars; and Libya formally launched its 2025–2030 strategy despite a divided government [1]. Sudan remains the outlier, with no national AI strategy, only institutional shells created by decree.

P2: Governance & Regulation

At 1.54, regulation lags strategy by a wide margin. Data protection law is now near-universal in the sub-region, but no country has enacted a binding, comprehensive AI law [1]. Morocco's planned Digital X.0 framework law and Egypt's pending draft AI law are the furthest-advanced legislative efforts; Algeria and Tunisia rely on amended data-protection statutes in the absence of AI-specific rules. Mauritania's data protection authority is constrained by missing implementing decrees, Libya acknowledges legislative fragmentation as a baseline condition, and Sudan has no data protection law in force at all [1].

P3: Infrastructure & Data

Infrastructure (1.59) is the sub-region's second-strongest pillar, but the average conceals extreme concentration. Morocco and Egypt anchor regional compute capacity. Morocco's multi-site buildout includes a 500MW Naver/NVIDIA campus, a 100MW Dakhla facility, and a 386MW Tetouan hub, while Egypt's data-centre market grows roughly 20% annually [1]. Tunisia maintains modest hubs and Algeria remains in the public-sector digitisation phase. At the other extreme, Libya lacks foundational digital architecture despite plans for a sovereign cloud, Mauritania has negligible computing capacity and is positioned in Morocco's own regional planning as a recipient of cross-border compute, not a producer of it, and Sudan's infrastructure is actively degraded by conflict, the only case in the sub-region where digital capacity is moving backward [1].

P4: Human Capital

Human Capital averages 1.53, sustained by unusually deep formal pipelines in the Maghreb core. Algeria offers 74 AI master's programmes across 52 universities and roughly 30,000 engineering graduates annually, though low salaries drive talent abroad; Egypt targets 30,000 AI specialists by 2030 through the Digital Egypt Pioneers Initiative; Morocco's Al-Khwarizmi Program and UNESCO-affiliated AI Movement centre anchor its pipeline [1]. Mauritania and Libya are building from a low base, and specialised AI regulatory expertise is scarce sub-region-wide, a gap that constrains the regulation pillar directly.

P5: Innovation & Ecosystem

The innovation pillar (1.37) reflects an ecosystem anchored almost entirely by Morocco and Egypt. Moroccan startups raised roughly US$95 million in 2024, nearly tripling 2023, while Egypt targets more than 250 AI companies by 2030 [1, 31].

Algeria's National AI Fund and Dzair digital-services portal show emerging state-led momentum, and Tunisia sustains active fintech and healthtech pilots. Libya's target of 100 AI startups by 2030 remains aspirational, and Mauritania and Sudan have no identifiable AI venture ecosystem [1].

P6: Ethics & Inclusion

Ethics & Inclusion (1.33) is among the sub-region's least developed pillars. Egypt's AI Governance Guide and Morocco's UNESCO-aligned platform are the most articulated frameworks, though both lack enforcement mechanisms; Libya's AI Ethics Charter, launched alongside its strategy, is a notable step for a fragile state [1]. Mauritania and Algeria name ethics as a strategic priority without operational oversight. Sudan has no ethics framework and is the subject of regional concern over AI-enabled surveillance in its civil war. Citizen redress mechanisms are largely absent across the sub-region.

P7: Regional Integration

Integration (1.47) is sustained more by continental and Arab-world convening than by intra-Maghreb institutions. Morocco's hosting of Africa's first UNESCO-affiliated AI conference, and the resulting African Consensus on AI, positions it as a continental convening power, while Egypt holds parallel leadership roles in the Arab AI Group and the AU's African AI Group [1]. Libya helped shape the Arab AI Strategy despite domestic fragility. Yet no binding Arab Maghreb Union AI framework exists, no shared data-protection standard connects the seven states, and there is no mechanism through which Egypt’s relatively mature AI law-making could inform Libya’s or Mauritania’s.

P8: Implementation & Impact

Implementation (1.04) is the sub-region's weakest pillar, though it is the only sub-region to average above 1.0 on it. Every country but Sudan has produced a strategy; within the assessed evidence, no state yet demonstrates a fully functioning AI governance system with measurable outcomes [1]. Egypt's clearest gap is the absence of AI-specific monitoring indicators rather than deployment itself; Algeria's portal pilots and Morocco's funded programmes show real delivery capacity, yet both rank well outside the global top fifty on AI readiness [12]. Libya and Mauritania remain in early implementation, and Sudan's institutional shells have issued no AI regulation to date. The sub-region thus exemplifies, at the highest level of ambition on the continent, the pattern that recurs everywhere, in which strategy density has not translated into operational governance.

Country Spotlight: Sudan

Sudan illustrates North Africa's most acute governance gap, and a uniquely consequential one. The country has no AI-specific law, no data protection law in force, and no national AI strategy; its only concrete institutional step is a November 2025 prime-ministerial decree establishing a Sudanese Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority, which has issued no regulation since [1]. Yet Sudan is not a governance non-event. Since the civil war began in 2023, AI-assisted surveillance, drone targeting, and open-source intelligence monitoring have been deployed by warring parties, turning the country into what researchers describe as a live laboratory for autonomous-systems warfare [1]. This has directly shaped continental policy. A November 2025 AU-led workshop in Kigali produced a roadmap to integrate AI into the Continental Early Warning System partly in response to the Sudan crisis [1]. Sudan's position at the bottom of the sub-region captures a governance gap with active human consequences.

Key Data Points

- North Africa records the continent's highest sub-regional composite average (1.56) and the highest single pillar average in the Index (Strategy & Vision, 2.25) [1].
- Six of seven states have published or formally launched a national AI strategy since 2019, an adoption rate matched by few other parts of the continent, yet no state has a comprehensive, binding AI law in force [1, 3].
- Sudan ranks 186th globally on the 2025 Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index, the steepest outlier in a sub-region whose other states range from 52 (Egypt) to 138 (Mauritania) [12].
- Algeria's 74 AI master's programmes across 52 universities constitute the sub-region's deepest formal talent pipeline; Morocco targets US$10 billion in AI-driven GDP growth by 2030, backed by a sovereign compute buildout exceeding 900MW combined [1].

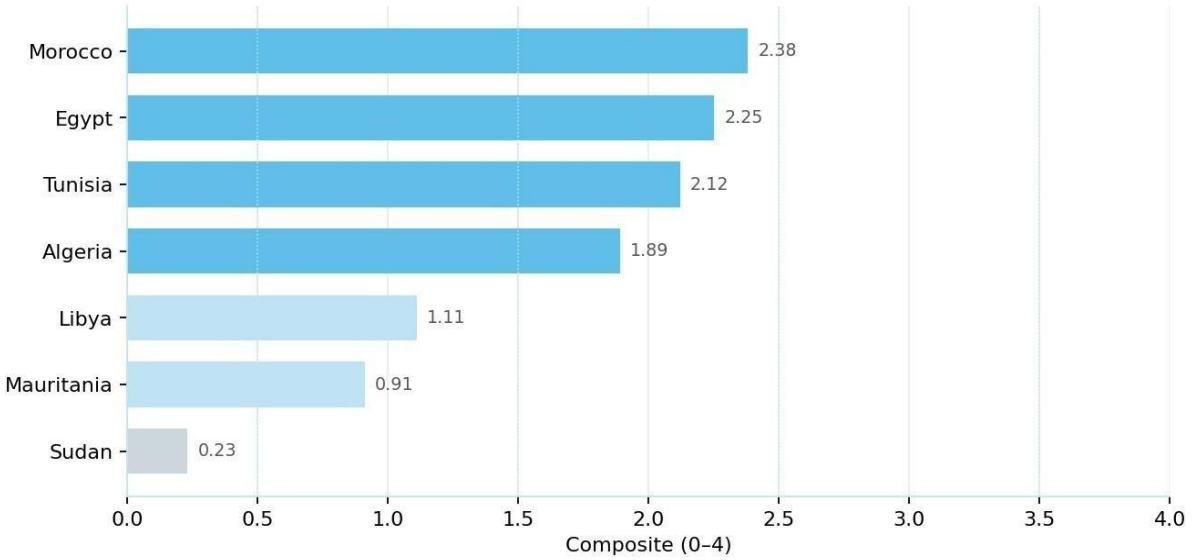


Figure 3.1: North Africa composite scores, seven assessed states (0–4 scale). Colour steps are the published maturity bands (Appendix A.9). Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook [1].

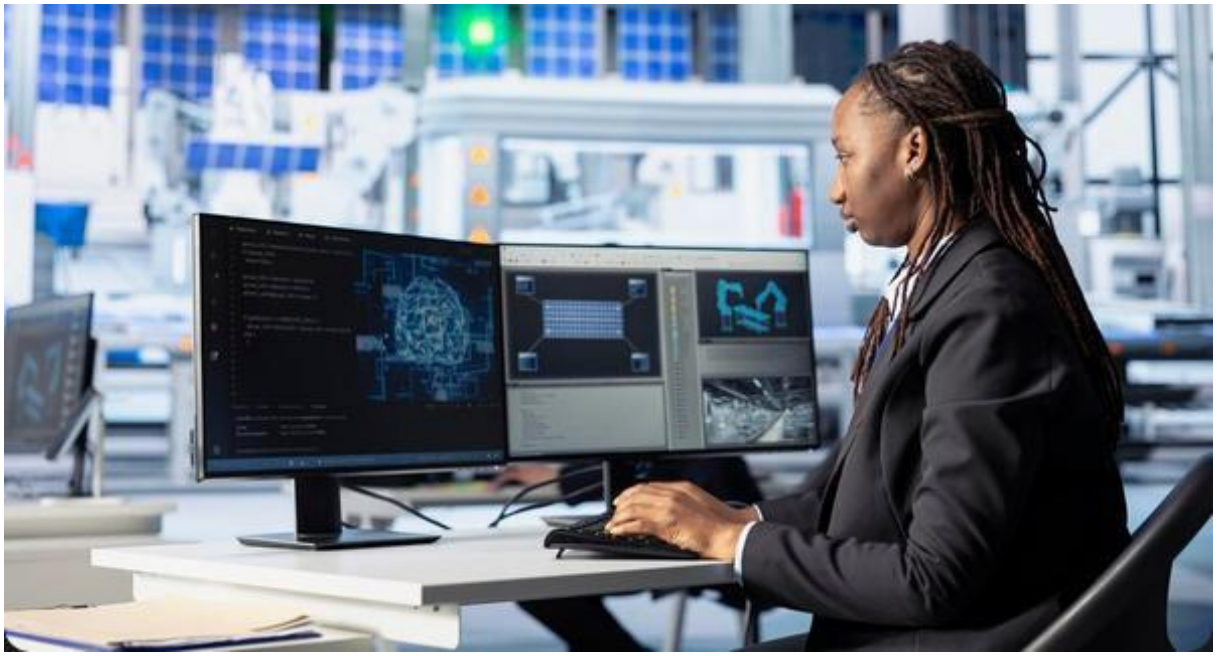
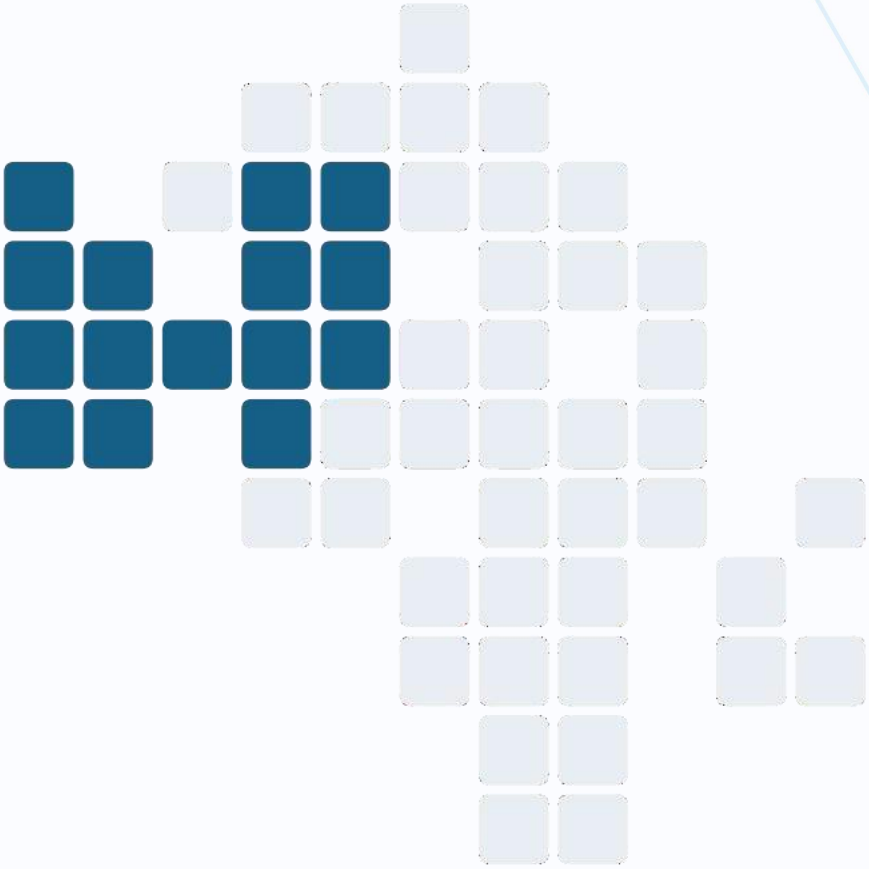


Table 3.2: North Africa, country composite scores (0–4 scale) [1].

Country	Composite	Country	Composite
Morocco	2.38	Libya	1.11
Egypt	2.25	Mauritania	0.91
Tunisia	2.12	Sudan	0.23
Algeria	1.89		

Chapter 3.2



West Africa

15 states assessed · Average composite 1.25

3.2 West Africa

Sub-regional Overview

West Africa, fifteen states from Cabo Verde to Nigeria under the UNECA classification, is emerging as one of Africa's most dynamic sub-regions for AI governance, driven by rapid digital transformation, expanding connectivity, youthful populations, and growing political recognition of AI's strategic importance. Its average composite of 1.25 nonetheless places it fourth of five sub-regions, a reflection less of ambition than of scale and dispersion. With fifteen assessed states, West Africa spans the full maturity spectrum, from structured ecosystems in Nigeria, Benin, and Ghana to states still establishing foundational digital-governance frameworks, often with support from international development partners and regional institutions [1]. The defining characteristic of the sub-region is the contrast between growing AI ambition and limited institutional capacity. Numerous governments are drafting national AI strategies and expanding digital infrastructure, but dependence on foreign cloud infrastructure, limited local compute, shortages of AI specialists, and fragmented regulatory systems continue to constrain progress. Regional organisations, above all ECOWAS, provide the sub-region's strongest institutional asset for policy harmonisation and collective capacity-building [20].

Table 3.3: West Africa, average pillar scores and weighted composite (0–4 scale), 15 countries assessed [1].

Pillar	Sub-regional average (0-4)
P1 Strategy & Vision	1.77
P2 Governance & Regulation	1.18
P3 Infrastructure & Data	1.34
P4 Human Capital	1.11
P5 Innovation & Ecosystem	1.02
P6 Ethics & Inclusion	1.21
P7 Regional Integration	1.51
P8 Implementation & Impact	0.65
Weighted composite	1.25

P1: Strategy & Vision

Strategy & Vision (1.77) is West Africa's strongest pillar; only Regional Integration ranks first among sub-regions. Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Togo have initiated formal strategy processes, and more than half of assessed states are developing or drafting national AI strategies, most emphasising digital transformation, innovation, skills, and economic competitiveness [1, 3]. Few, however, have progressed beyond planning into implementation, and dedicated budgets, measurable targets, and monitoring frameworks remain limited. Political commitment is increasingly visible; translating strategic vision into operational governance structures remains the sub-region's central strategy challenge.

P2: Governance & Regulation

Regulation (1.18) trails strategy by more than half a point. Data protection legislation has expanded considerably, and Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire possess relatively developed frameworks, but AI-specific legislation remains largely absent [1]. Most data protection authorities lack explicit AI mandates, technical expertise, or the resources to oversee advanced AI systems; enforcement is uneven; and few countries have established AI-specific oversight institutions, algorithmic accountability requirements, or regulatory sandboxes capable of supporting responsible innovation.

P3: Infrastructure & Data

Infrastructure (1.34) remains one of the sub-region's most significant bottlenecks despite substantially improved submarine-cable connectivity. Local data-centre capacity is limited outside the major markets. Nigeria, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire possess comparatively strong digital infrastructure, while smaller economies depend heavily on foreign cloud providers and overseas hosting [1, 15]. Access to GPU computing, high-performance facilities, and sovereign cloud remains scarce across the board, raising persistent concerns over digital sovereignty, data localisation, and long-term technological dependence.

P4: Human Capital

Human Capital (1.11) represents both the sub-region's greatest opportunity and one of its most persistent constraints. West Africa benefits from a large youth population and rapidly growing interest in digital skills; Togo, Ghana, and Nigeria have launched substantial AI training programmes and university partnerships [1]. Yet AI researchers, machine-learning engineers, policy experts, and regulatory specialists remain in short supply, and while universities are expanding AI-related curricula, the scale of training remains insufficient to meet projected workforce demand [16].

P5: Innovation & Ecosystem

The innovation pillar (1.02) captures an ecosystem expanding rapidly but from a narrow base, led primarily by Nigeria and Ghana [1, 17]. Startup activity in fintech, healthtech, agritech, edtech, and public-sector innovation is increasing across several countries, supported by hubs, incubators, and accelerators. However, AI-specific investment remains difficult to track, AI safety infrastructure is largely absent, formal university–industry research partnerships are limited, and most AI startups operate at early stages with constrained access to capital.

P6: Ethics & Inclusion

Ethics & Inclusion (1.21) remains among the weaker dimensions of governance in the sub-region. Few countries require algorithmic impact assessments, bias audits, transparency obligations, or AI accountability mechanisms, and citizen redress systems for AI-related harms are generally absent [1]. Stakeholder consultations increasingly include civil society, but meaningful participation by marginalised communities, women, rural populations, and youth remains inconsistent. Emerging strategy processes demonstrate growing awareness of ethical concerns; institutional safeguards have yet to follow.

P7: Regional Integration

Regional Integration (1.51) is West Africa's distinctive governance asset, the highest integration average of any sub-region. ECOWAS, UEMOA, Smart Africa, and AU initiatives have created substantive platforms for collaboration. The ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Personal Data Protection provides a binding regional framework for data governance [20], while Smart Africa's Digital Economy Blueprint coordinates infrastructure priorities across member states. Countries participate widely in regional consultations, capacity-building programmes, and shared infrastructure projects. No comprehensive ECOWAS AI framework yet exists, but growing cooperation on data governance, cybersecurity, and AI policy suggests strong foundations for future harmonisation.

P8: Implementation & Impact

Implementation (0.65) is the sub-region's, and the continent's, lowest pillar average, barely a third of the strategy pillar [1]. Many governments have announced strategies, consultations, and pilot projects, but few have established operational governance systems, and dedicated AI budgets, monitoring frameworks, public registries, and enforcement mechanisms remain rare. Several countries have nonetheless demonstrated practical AI applications in agriculture, education, social protection, telecommunications, and public administration. The challenge has shifted from policy formulation to sustained implementation and institutionalisation.

Country Spotlight: Togo

Togo illustrates both the opportunities and the challenges facing AI governance in West Africa. Although the country has not yet adopted a national AI strategy, it has emerged as one of the sub-region's most proactive governments in AI capacity building and digital transformation. The Togo Data Lab, developed in partnership with the University of California, Berkeley and supported by Google.org funding, has become a notable example of evidence-based AI deployment for public policy, and the country has launched ambitious workforce-development initiatives targeting tens of thousands of students annually, alongside infrastructure investment through the Equiano submarine cable and sovereign cloud initiatives centred on the Lomé Data Centre [1]. Significant governance gaps remain. AI-specific legislation is absent, oversight mechanisms are limited, and no dedicated AI authority exists. Togo's experience demonstrates how practical AI deployment can advance faster than governance structures, a challenge shared by many West African states, and visible in Togo's own pillar profile, where Regional Integration (2.57) far outstrips every domestic pillar [1].

Key Data Points

- West Africa's Regional Integration average (1.51) is the highest of any sub-region, anchored by the binding ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Personal Data Protection [1, 20].
- Implementation & Impact (0.65) is the lowest pillar average recorded anywhere in the Index, barely a third of the sub-region's Strategy & Vision average [1].
- More than half of assessed West African states are developing or drafting national AI strategies, but most score below the 'Established' anchor for AI-specific regulation and enforcement [1].
- Local GPU and high-performance computing capacity remains extremely limited across the sub-region; AI workforce-development programmes are expanding fastest in Nigeria, Ghana, and Togo [1].

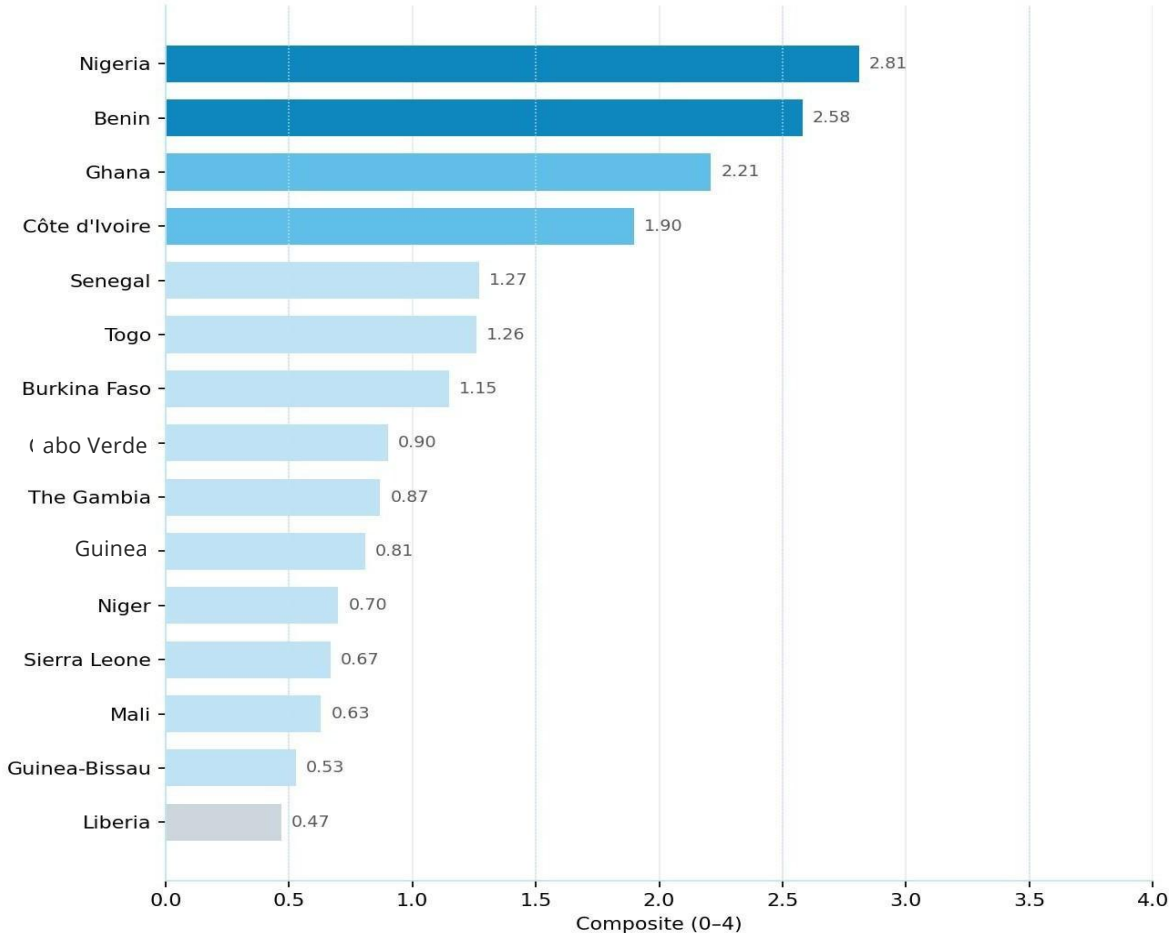
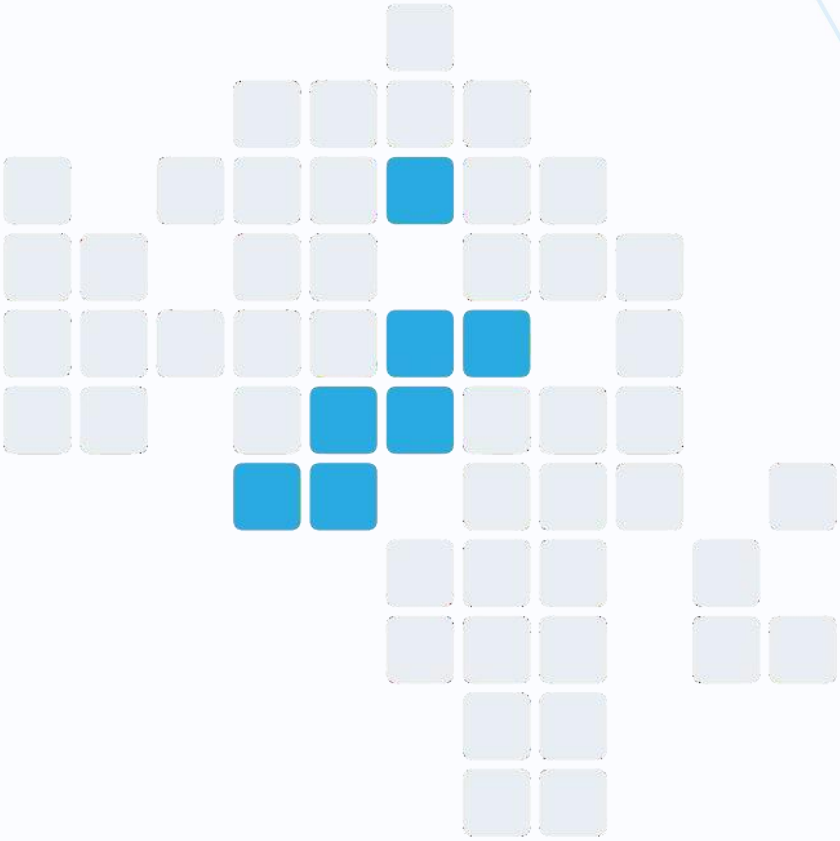


Figure 3.2: West Africa composite scores, fifteen assessed states (0–4 scale). Colour steps are the published maturity bands (Appendix A.9). Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook [1].

Table 3.4: West Africa, country composite scores (0–4 scale) [1].

Country	Composite	Country	Composite
Nigeria	2.81	The Gambia	0.87
Benin	2.58	Guinea	0.81
Ghana	2.21	Niger	0.70
Côte d'Ivoire	1.90	Sierra Leone	0.67
Senegal	1.27	Mali	0.63
Togo	1.26	Guinea-Bissau	0.53
Burkina Faso	1.15	Liberia	0.47
Cabo Verde	0.90		

Chapter 3.3



Central Africa

7 states assessed · Average composite 1.07

3.3 Central Africa

Sub-regional Overview

Central Africa, comprising Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe under the UNECA classification, records the continent's lowest sub-regional composite average, at 1.07 [1]. The seven states share a political economy defined by resource dependence, fragile or transitional governance, and the lowest digital-infrastructure density on the continent. Several are landlocked or have only recently gained submarine-cable access, and multiple states have experienced coups, civil conflict, or contested elections within the assessment period. Against this backdrop, AI governance is emerging unevenly, often in spite of structural conditions. Gabon has built unusually sophisticated governance institutions without yet adopting a formal strategy; the Republic of the Congo leads on research infrastructure; Cameroon leads on strategic vision. Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and the Central African Republic illustrate how oil wealth, authoritarian governance, or state fragility can each independently stall AI governance. The sub-region's starting point is not so much 'pre-AI' as 'pre-foundational', since most countries are still building the data protection, electricity, and connectivity layers on which AI governance depends.

Table 3.5: Central Africa, average pillar scores and weighted composite (0–4 scale), 7 countries assessed [1].

Pillar	Sub-regional average (0-4)
P1 Strategy & Vision	1.44
P2 Governance & Regulation	1.31
P3 Infrastructure & Data	1.13
P4 Human Capital	0.76
P5 Innovation & Ecosystem	0.77
P6 Ethics & Inclusion	1.16
P7 Regional Integration	1.07
P8 Implementation & Impact	0.70
Weighted composite	1.07

P1: Strategy & Vision

Strategy & Vision (1.44) is, as everywhere, the sub-region's strongest pillar, but it is the lowest strategy average of any sub-region. Cameroon is the only state to have formally launched an OECD.AI-registered national AI strategy (SNIA, unveiled July 2025) [29]. Gabon has advanced governance preparation, a UNESCO Readiness Assessment and a multi-stakeholder technical committee, without yet adopting a standalone strategy, while the Republic of the Congo embeds AI within broader digital plans [1]. Chad's strategy remains aspirational, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe have no AI-specific vision document, and the Central African Republic has none of the above. Strategy formation is accelerating from 2024 onward, but most plans remain pre-adoption.

P2: Governance & Regulation

Regulation (1.31) is unusually close to strategy in this sub-region, a distinctive profile driven by data-protection groundwork in the absence of AI-specific law. Gabon and the Republic of the Congo have operational data protection authorities; Cameroon's was created by a December 2024 law but is not yet staffed [1]. Several states have signed or ratified the Malabo Convention, though Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea remain outside it [6]. Enforcement, where it exists at all, remains rare, and no state has AI-specific legislation.

P3: Infrastructure & Data

Infrastructure (1.13) reflects the continent's thinnest digital foundations. The Republic of the Congo's sovereign data centres, including a US$72.8 million Tier III facility, anchor the sub-region's strongest capacity, while Gabon and Cameroon have workable but unreliable connectivity [1]. Chad, the Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea remain landlocked or cable-dependent on neighbours, with internet penetration below 25% in some cases. No country in the sub-region hosts a hyperscaler facility, and sovereign cloud capacity is nascent everywhere except the Republic of the Congo.

P4: Human Capital

Human Capital (0.76) is the lowest human-capital average on the continent. The Republic of the Congo's ARCAI, Africa's first dedicated AI research centre, with an operational master's programme, is the regional and continental outlier [30]; elsewhere, AI research capacity is negligible, with most countries reporting zero AI patents and minimal peer-reviewed output [1]. Language coverage compounds the gap. French and Portuguese benefit from global model support, but Sango and most Bantu languages have no meaningful NLP infrastructure. Talent pipelines exist only where ARCAI-style institutions or hyperscaler-backed training hubs, such as Cameroon's Douala tech corridor, have been deliberately built.

P5: Innovation & Ecosystem

Innovation (0.77) mirrors the human-capital deficit. The Republic of the Congo reports the most active procurement and partnership ecosystem, anchored by ARCAI's innovation function and formal MoUs with UNESCO, the ITU, and the Jack Ma Foundation; Cameroon's Douala–Buea–Yaoundé corridor is the most developed private ecosystem [1]. No country has an AI-specific regulatory sandbox, and AI safety-evaluation capacity is absent across the board except for nascent risk-assessment functions attached to the data protection authorities in Gabon and the Republic of the Congo.

P6: Ethics & Inclusion

Ethics & Inclusion (1.16) is comparatively strong relative to the sub-region's other pillars, driven by civil-society and judicial engagement. Gabon's UNESCO-validated, multi-stakeholder CTN-IA and the Republic of the Congo's training of 80 judicial actors on AI and the rule of law are the standout initiatives [1]. Redress mechanisms are formally legislated in most countries but operationally hollow. Data protection authorities exist on paper well before they are staffed or accessible to citizens. Rural populations, speakers of languages other than French or Portuguese, and residents of conflict-affected areas are structurally excluded from every governance process reviewed.

P7: Regional Integration

Integration (1.07) rests principally on Malabo Convention engagement and UN-system partnerships more than on the regional bloc itself. The Republic of the Congo's hosting of UNECA's flagship AI research centre [30] and Gabon's membership in UNESCO's Global Network of AI Supervisory Authorities mark the most active multilateral engagement [1]. ECCAS provides minimal AI-specific coordination; most cooperation occurs bilaterally or through UN-system channels.

P8: Implementation & Impact

Implementation (0.70) is the sub-region's weakest pillar by a wide margin, less than half its strategy average. Even the strongest performers score modestly here, reflecting a consistent pattern. Laws are enacted and institutions are named, but measurable governance outcomes, enforcement actions, sectoral AI deployments with oversight, published M&E, remain rare within the assessed evidence [1]. The gap between legislative text and operational reality is the sub-region's defining governance characteristic.

Country Spotlight: Gabon

On the final composite scores, Gabon leads Central Africa, and it does so through an unusual route, institutions before strategy. Without a formally adopted national AI strategy, Gabon has assembled the sub-region's most sophisticated governance architecture, including a UNESCO-validated, multi-stakeholder national technical committee on AI (CTN-IA), an operational data protection authority with emerging AI risk-assessment functions, and membership in UNESCO's Global Network of AI Supervisory Authorities [1]. Gabon posts the sub-region's strongest scores on Governance & Regulation, Ethics & Inclusion, Regional Integration, and, most tellingly, Implementation & Impact, where it is the only Central African state to reach the 'Developing' anchor. Gabon's trajectory inverts the continental norm of strategy-first governance and suggests an alternative sequencing, building supervisory capacity and multilateral anchoring before publishing a vision document. Its test, shared with the Republic of the Congo, where world-class research infrastructure at ARCAI coexisted with a nationwide election-day internet blackout in March 2026, is whether technical governance capacity can be insulated from the political incentives of long-incumbency states.

Key Data Points

- Central Africa records the continent's lowest sub-regional composite average (1.07), the lowest averages on Human Capital (0.76) and Innovation & Ecosystem (0.77), and the second-lowest average on Implementation & Impact (0.70) [1].
- Only Cameroon has formally launched a national AI strategy as of mid-2026 [29]; Gabon leads the sub-region's composite scores through institutional development more than strategic ambition [1].
- The Republic of the Congo hosts ARCAI, Africa's first dedicated AI research centre, offering the continent's first AI-specific master's programme, the sub-region's singular human-capital asset [30].
- No country in the sub-region hosts a hyperscaler facility, and internet penetration remains below 25% in the most constrained states [1].

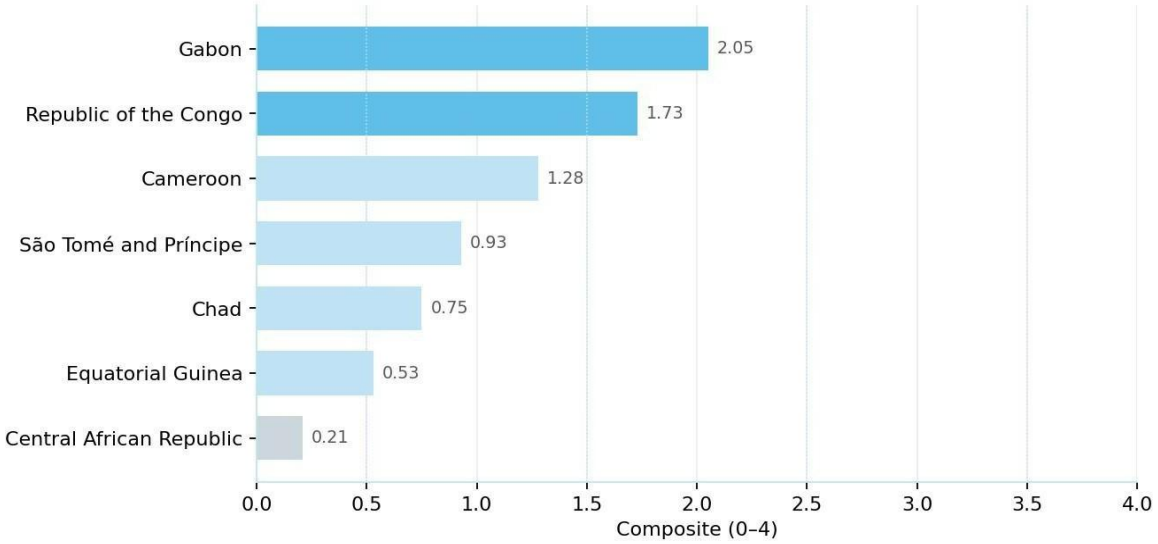
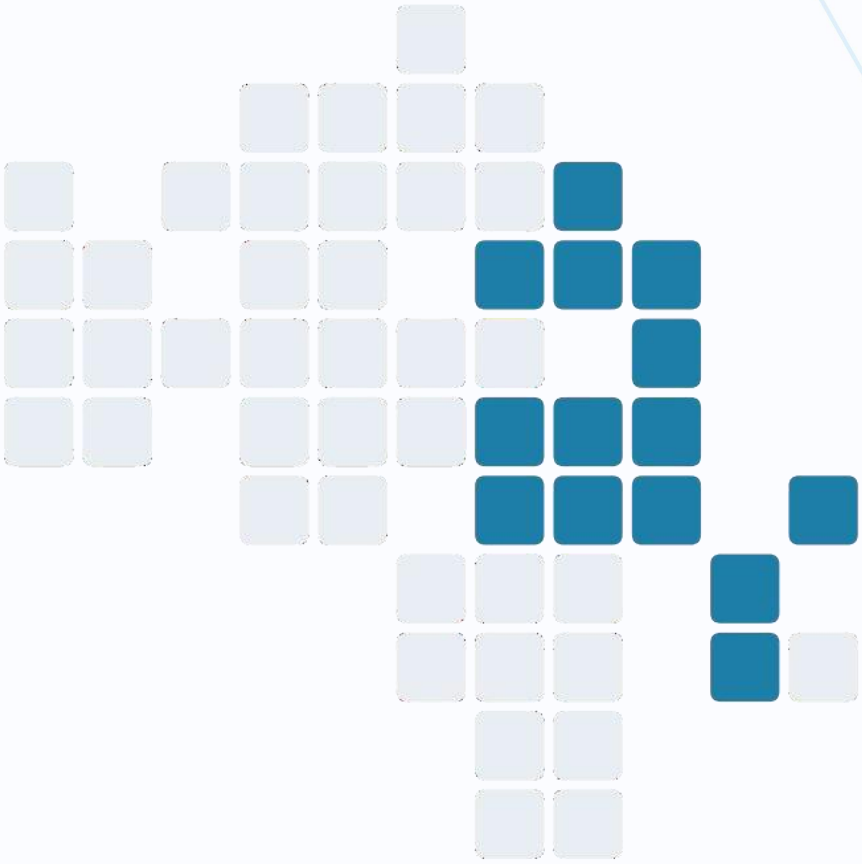


Figure 3.3: Central Africa composite scores, seven assessed states (0–4 scale). Colour steps are the published maturity bands (Appendix A.9). Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook [1].

Table 3.6: Central Africa, country composite scores (0–4 scale) [1].

Country	Composite	Country	Composite
Gabon	2.05	Chad	0.75
Republic of the Congo	1.73	Equatorial Guinea	0.53
Cameroon	1.28	Central African Republic	0.21
São Tomé and Príncipe	0.93		

Chapter 3.4



East Africa

14 states assessed · Average composite 1.27

3.4 East Africa

Sub-regional Overview

East Africa is the Index's second-largest sub-region, with fourteen states under the UNECA classification, spanning the EAC Partner States within the grouping (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, the DRC, and Somalia), the Horn (Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea), and the Indian Ocean states (Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles). Its average composite of 1.27 places it third among sub-regions, but no other sub-region contains a wider internal spread, from the continental leader, Rwanda, to the continent's lowest-scoring state, Eritrea [1]. This internal variance underscores the need for targeted governance interventions tailored to each country's context. The sub-region's political economy is defined by a tension between rapid, progressive regional integration and deeply entrenched national interests, a tension detailed under P7: Regional Integration below. Over the last decade, EAC Partner States have invested significantly in hard and soft digital infrastructure, and the sub-region's governance is explicitly anchored in the AU Continental AI Strategy [2], a commitment re-echoed in the EAC ministers' 2026 Declaration on Artificial Intelligence [8]. Kenya leads the sub-region, and by most rankings the continent, in AI startup activity and funding, underscored by the AfDB–UNDP AI 10 Billion Initiative launched at the Nairobi AI Forum in February 2026, which seeks to mobilise up to US$10 billion by 2035 [7]. This demonstrates a strategic acknowledgment of AI's transformative potential, yet actual policy and enforcement frameworks remain nascent.

Table 3.7: East Africa, average pillar scores and weighted composite (0–4 scale), 14 countries assessed [1].

Pillar	Sub-regional average (0-4)
P1 Strategy & Vision	1.63
P2 Governance & Regulation	1.24
P3 Infrastructure & Data	1.46
P4 Human Capital	1.23
P5 Innovation & Ecosystem	1.07
P6 Ethics & Inclusion	1.04
P7 Regional Integration	1.41
P8 Implementation & Impact	0.86
Weighted composite	1.27

P1: Strategy & Vision

Strategy & Vision (1.63) leads the sub-region's pillar profile. Rwanda's Cabinet-approved National AI Policy (April 2023) [27], Kenya's National AI Strategy (launched March 2025) [26], and Ethiopia's national AI policy, which provides for triennial review, are substantive documents modelled on the AU Continental AI Strategy and UNESCO's Readiness Assessment Methodology [2, 13]. Several other states, including Uganda and Tanzania, are drafting strategies or in public consultation, while the Horn and Indian Ocean states largely lack AI-specific vision documents [1]. The pillar's high dispersion reflects the sub-region as a whole, a leading edge that is continentally exemplary alongside a long tail with no strategy activity at all. This fragmentation underscores a critical disconnect between regional innovators and the broader national landscape, and points to the value of coordinated regional planning. Comprehensive, regionally aligned strategies, especially for lagging states, would foster more cohesive progress and strengthen the overall resilience and inclusivity of East Africa's AI ecosystem.

P2: Governance & Regulation

Regulation (1.24) rests on data protection foundations rather than AI-specific law. Existing data protection legislation and its implementing bodies govern data privacy and, indirectly, AI; courts of general jurisdiction handle AI-related suits and remedies [1]. Kenya's Artificial Intelligence Bill remains under debate in the Senate [28], and draft bills in Kenya and Ethiopia reportedly propose mandatory AI registries. No state in the sub-region yet has a comprehensive AI law in force. Without dedicated AI legislation, enforcement architectures remain incomplete, risking unchecked deployment of harmful AI applications. Enhanced governance will require clear legal frameworks, including AI-specific standards, liability regimes, and compliance mechanisms; the priority is to accelerate the enactment of AI laws, drawing on global best practice, and to embed enforcement mechanisms within a multi-stakeholder governance model.

P3: Infrastructure & Data

Infrastructure (1.46) is the sub-region's second-strongest pillar, reflecting a digital ecosystem transforming from basic connectivity toward AI readiness. Kenya has the sub-region's largest concentration of data centres; existing fibre and submarine-cable access supply cheaper, faster bandwidth, and shared infrastructure sustains landlocked members, with Uganda supplied through Kenya and Tanzania, and Ethiopia through Djibouti [1]. Personal data protection laws provide frameworks for cross-border transfers and data-localisation requirements in support of data sovereignty. The Indian Ocean states diverge sharply. Seychelles combines high connectivity with virtually no local data storage, while Madagascar and Comoros remain near the foundations.

P4: Human Capital

Human Capital (1.23) is being addressed through system-wide reform. Capacity building and curriculum reform are underway at all education levels to integrate computer studies and AI, universities have incorporated AI subjects from certificate to doctoral level, and governments fund students in ICT and AI courses despite limited R&D budgets [1]. Private-sector actors, startups, and hubs play a critical role in research, awareness, and training, and states draw on UNESCO Readiness Assessment reports to guide policy [13]. Nonetheless, significant gaps remain in official data on AI talent pipelines, and linguistic barriers limit AI training data in regional languages like Swahili. This limits the inclusivity and scalability of AI capacity-building efforts; comprehensive talent-tracking systems and AI training data in regional languages are needed to foster broader participation.

P5: Innovation & Ecosystem

Innovation (1.07) is heavily concentrated. Kenya has the sub-region's most mature ecosystem, with the largest startup base, strongest funding, and broadest policy momentum; Rwanda pairs a smaller ecosystem with the strongest enabling policy [1]. Uganda and Ethiopia are developing ecosystems led by university labs, deeptech hubs, and public research partnerships, and Tanzania sustains a small but visible AI sector with a fintech sandbox and formal university–government partnerships. However, AI safety infrastructure remains limited, with no mature standards regime across the sub-region; developing regional standards for AI safety, ethics, and interoperability is a priority for fostering trustworthy innovation.

P6: Ethics & Inclusion

Ethics & Inclusion (1.04) depends mostly on policy commitments, data protection, and consultation rather than binding AI audit law. Rwanda's Responsible AI Office is the strongest instrument in force, while Tanzania's 2025 guidelines championing algorithmic traceability remain non-binding guidance; Ethiopia has the clearest policy language on ethics and inclusion, but implementation remains soft [1]. Uganda and Tanzania operate complaints mechanisms through their data protection offices, yet mandatory algorithmic impact assessments, bias audits, and dedicated AI redress channels are absent everywhere. Across the sub-region, women, youth, persons with disabilities, and rural communities remain underrepresented in governance processes. Addressing these gaps will require binding ethical standards, comprehensive AI impact-assessment frameworks, and inclusive governance that ensures diverse stakeholder participation and accountability.

P7: Regional Integration

Integration (1.41) is anchored by a landmark 2026 sequence of regional commitments. At the 4th EAC Regional Science, Technology and Innovation Conference in Kigali, ministers of the EAC Partner States adopted a Declaration on Artificial Intelligence committing the bloc to a Regional AI Technologies Fund [8], and the EAC AI Alliance

was launched with its inaugural flagship, the Regional Network on AI in Education and Research [9]; a regional EAC AI Strategy (2026–2031) was advanced through validation in the same period [1]. Together these initiatives directly operationalise the AU Continental AI Strategy's provisions on regional cooperation [2]. A critical gap persists, however. Momentum in translating the regional framework into actionable national legislation remains constrained, creating regulatory vacuums, and bilateral MoUs with foreign partners can operate outside regional oversight, exposing citizen data sovereignty, economic autonomy, and technological sovereignty to systemic risk. Strengthening follow-through on national legislative commitments, and establishing regional oversight of bilateral agreements, will be essential to cohesive, enforceable AI governance across East Africa.

P8: Implementation & Impact

Implementation (0.86) reveals institutional fragmentation beneath the strategic momentum. No publicly documented independent AI office with its own statutory budget has been identified; AI-related spending is folded into broader ICT allocations, making AI-specific disbursement difficult to trace, and no mandatory AI registry is yet in force [1]. Governance attention is increasingly sectoral, health, agriculture, education, financial services, the judiciary, public administration, media, and disaster management, and emerging frameworks increasingly reflect principles associated with WHO and AU guidance, including non-discrimination, bias mitigation, transparency, and human agency. Policy language is plentiful; the central gap is the weakness of enforcement architecture, especially regarding mass biometric data collection, disinformation, labour exploitation, and public trust in state institutions. Bridging it will require independent AI oversight bodies with clear mandates and adequate resources, compliance enforcement through robust legal and regulatory mechanisms, and rigorous impact-evaluation frameworks for policies and operational practices.

Country Spotlight: Rwanda

Rwanda is the inaugural Index's highest-scoring state and the continent's clearest demonstration that coordinated execution, not resource endowment, closes the implementation gap. A small, landlocked, resource-poor country, Rwanda scores strongly across all eight pillars instead of excelling in one. Its Cabinet-approved National AI Policy (April 2023) [27], Responsible AI Office, early Malabo Convention ratification (2019) [6], and hosting of the inaugural Global AI Summit on Africa (April 2025), which produced a continent-wide declaration and the proposed US$60 billion Africa AI Fund [4], together span the full governance value chain from strategy through implementation. Rwanda's balance is the point. It is the only assessed state to combine high scores on both Implementation & Impact and Strategy & Vision, making it a forward benchmark for the continent as a whole. Kenya offers the sub-region's complementary lesson, continental leadership in startup activity, funding, and data-centre capacity paired with an AI Bill still in Senate debate [28], showing even the most dynamic ecosystems remain dependent on general data protection law until dedicated enforcement architecture arrives.

Key Data Points

- East Africa contains both the continent's highest-scoring state (Rwanda, 3.25) and its lowest (Eritrea, 0.08), the widest internal dispersion of any sub-region [1].
- EAC ministers adopted a Declaration on Artificial Intelligence at the 4th EAC Regional STI Conference in Kigali in 2026, committing Partner States to a Regional AI Technologies Fund, alongside the launch of the EAC AI Alliance [8, 9].
- Kenya leads the continent in AI startup activity and funding by most rankings and hosts the sub-region's largest concentration of data centres; its Artificial Intelligence Bill remains before the Senate [28].
- Data and privacy protection laws currently serve as the sub-region's de facto AI regulatory framework; no East African state has a comprehensive AI law in force [1].

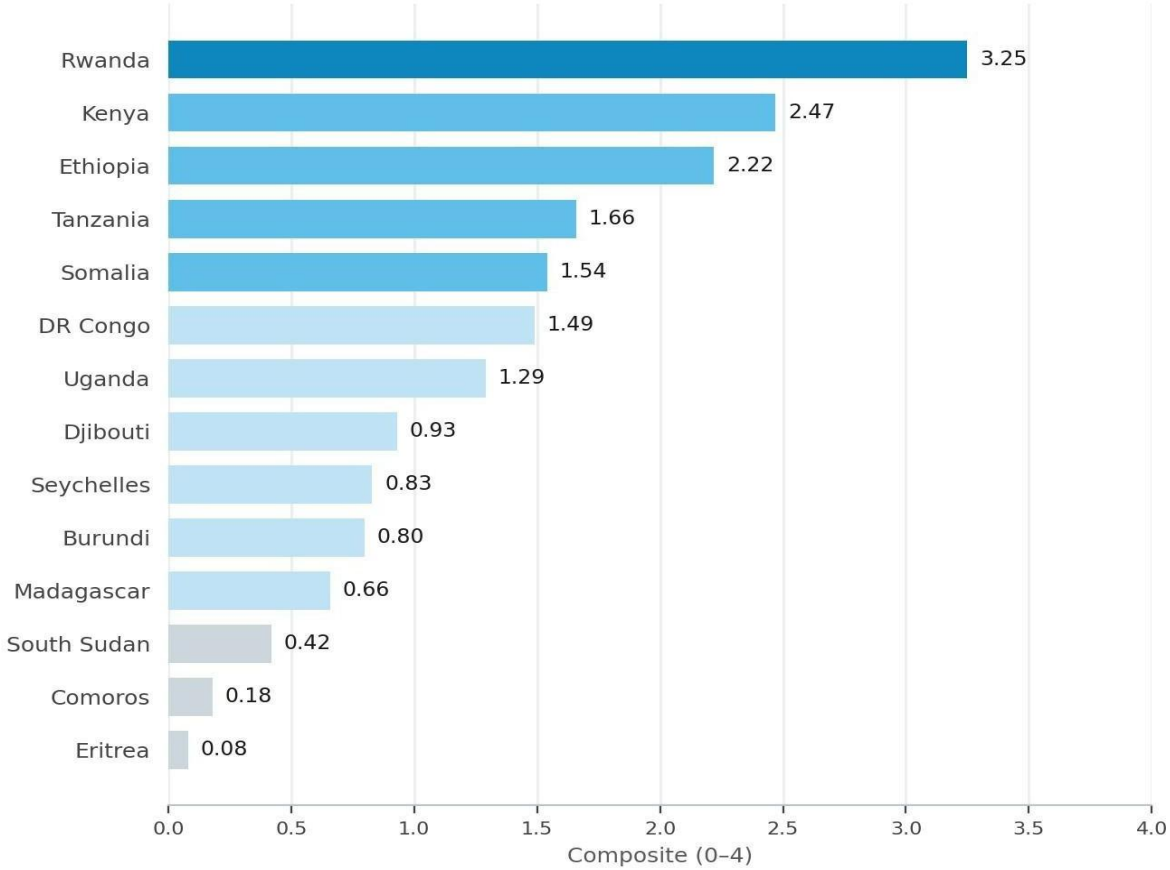
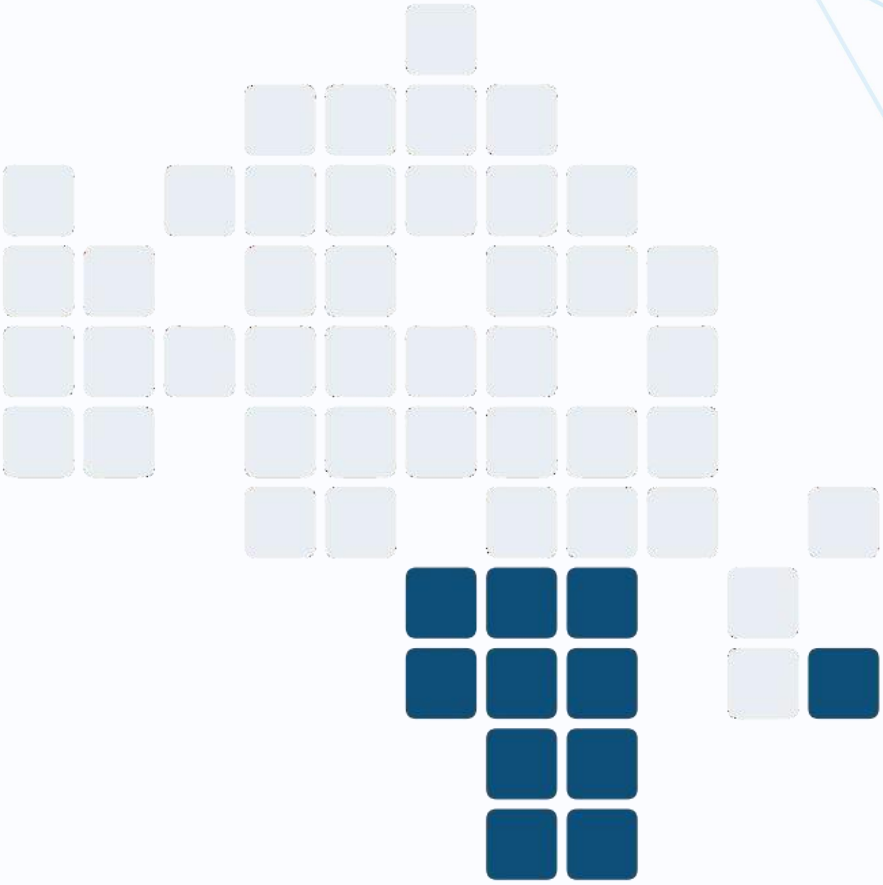


Figure 3.4: East Africa composite scores, fourteen assessed states (0–4 scale). Colour steps are the published maturity bands (Appendix A.9). Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook [1].

Table 3.8: East Africa, country composite scores (0–4 scale) [1].

Country	Composite	Country	Composite
Rwanda	3.25	Djibouti	0.93
Kenya	2.47	Seychelles	0.83
Ethiopia	2.22	Burundi	0.80
Tanzania	1.66	Madagascar	0.66
Somalia	1.54	South Sudan	0.42
DR Congo	1.49	Comoros	0.18
Uganda	1.29	Eritrea	0.08

Chapter 3.5



Southern Africa

11 states assessed · Average composite 1.49

3.5 Southern Africa

Sub-regional Overview

Southern Africa, eleven states under the UNECA classification, from Angola and Zambia through the SADC heartland to Mauritius, records the continent's second-highest composite average, at 1.49, yet remains defined by severe policy divergence, with no shared trajectory [1]. Mauritius, South Africa, and Zimbabwe form a leading cluster near the 'Developing' band, a second tier is actively drafting strategies, ethics codes, and laws, and several states still govern AI only through general digital and data legislation ill-suited to algorithmic systems. Beneath this divergence lies a shared implementation problem. Advanced instruments such as Mauritius's FAIR Guidelines [24] and Zimbabwe's Ubuntu-centred framework [25] remain non-binding, unadopted, or unfunded, and no state in the sub-region has enacted a dedicated, in-force AI Act. Regional blueprints, the SADC Digital Transformation Strategy [21] and the Windhoek Statement [22], promote alignment but lack binding authority, leaving enforcement dependent on national political will even as commercial AI deployment accelerates across the sub-region.

Table 3.9: Southern Africa, average pillar scores and weighted composite (0–4 scale), 11 countries assessed [1].

Pillar	Sub-regional average (0-4)
P1 Strategy & Vision	2.11
P2 Governance & Regulation	1.43
P3 Infrastructure & Data	1.72
P4 Human Capital	1.41
P5 Innovation & Ecosystem	1.20
P6 Ethics & Inclusion	1.48
P7 Regional Integration	1.45
P8 Implementation & Impact	0.72
Weighted composite	1.49

P1: Strategy & Vision

Strategy & Vision (2.11) is the sub-region's strongest pillar and the second-highest strategy average on the continent. Early adopters, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Lesotho, have launched official AI strategies [24, 25], and a promising second wave is underway. Angola's AI law has parliamentary backing, Malawi has a phased draft, and

Botswana, Namibia, and Mozambique are in active drafting, often backed by UNESCO readiness assessments [1, 13]. South Africa's progress stalled with the withdrawal of its 2026 draft policy [10]. Momentum is genuine but remains somewhat superficial. Almost none of the existing strategies include funded monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and Eswatini is still in the early stages of drafting its national AI strategy.

P2: Governance & Regulation

Regulation (1.43) is the sub-region's defining structural weakness relative to its ambitions. Lacking dedicated, enforceable AI legislation, member states rely on a patchwork of cybersecurity and data protection law. South Africa (via POPIA) and Mauritius lead in applying these indirect safeguards, while Angola is emerging as the legislative pioneer with a stringent draft AI law featuring extraterritorial reach and strict liability [1]. Others, Malawi, Eswatini, Mozambique, manage AI indirectly through recently enacted digital codes and data acts. The foundation is fragile. Enforcement capacity is universally weak, and some states still operate under decades-old frameworks or lack comprehensive data protection law entirely.

P3: Infrastructure & Data

Infrastructure (1.72) is the sub-region's, and the continent's, highest infrastructure average, but it is deeply uneven. South Africa is the only state in the sub-region (and one of few on the continent) with full hyperscaler capability [15]; Botswana's Tier III data centre and Zambia's Lusaka GPU hub represent aggressive second-tier investment; and Lesotho has secured a landmark US$6.2 billion pledge for a green AI data centre [32]. Yet average connectivity hovers around 59.8%, landlocked states contend with expensive fibre and unstable power grids, Mozambique is still laying foundational infrastructure, and Angola battles a wide internal connectivity divide [1].

P4: Human Capital

Human Capital (1.41) is highly uneven and functions as the sub-region's primary long-run constraint. South Africa and Mauritius hold the strongest talent pools; Zambia and Zimbabwe are prioritising STEM development and AI Centres of Excellence, highlighted by Zambia's partnership with Google; Angola is using its 2026 Startup Law as a capacity-building framework even while flagging critical shortages in specialised technical and legal talent [1]. At the lower end, coordination between academia and government is poor, ICT training carries limited AI focus, though the University of Eswatini's new AI Academy is a notable step, and the smallest research systems produce only one or two AI papers a year, with roughly 60 R&D personnel per million inhabitants [1].

P5: Innovation & Ecosystem

Innovation (1.20) is concentrated in South Africa and Mauritius, though Zambia is scaling rapidly, with approximately 45 startups, US$150 million in ecosystem funding,

and infrastructure such as the BongoHive AI Lab [1]. Localised innovation is taking root elsewhere, in AI applied to diamond prospecting in Botswana, pre-seed funding under Angola's 2026 Startup Law, and proposed regulatory sandboxes in neighbouring markets. This commercial momentum exposes a severe vulnerability. AI safety infrastructure is effectively absent, with no operational audit bodies, evaluation labs, or regulatory sandboxes, so innovation is outpacing the sub-region's capacity for assurance.

P6: Ethics & Inclusion

Ethics & Inclusion (1.48) is the continent's highest average on this pillar, reflecting a genuinely rich framework landscape, though one still functioning as aspiration, well short of binding law. Approaches range from principle-based instruments (Mauritius's FAIR Guidelines [24], Zimbabwe's Ubuntu-centred framework [25], South Africa's human-control and fairness focus) to highly procedural drafts. Malawi's draft introduces mandatory impact assessments and a national AI registry, while Angola's legislates citizens' rights to explanation and to opt out [1]. These frameworks broadly fail to protect vulnerable groups, women, rural populations, informal workers, who remain underrepresented, and the deficit is sharpest where biometric systems are deployed nationwide without published audits or public redress mechanisms.

P7: Regional Integration

Integration (1.45) rests on substantial groundwork, the SADC Digital Transformation Strategy [21], the Model Law on Data Protection and RISDP 2020–2030 [23], and the 2022 Windhoek Statement [22], and tangible collaboration. Several members are aligning data governance through the UNECA–AU process, the roster of Malabo ratifiers has grown since the Convention entered into force [6], and Botswana and Malawi have completed UNESCO readiness assessments [13]. The critical vulnerability is the absence of a binding SADC AI framework. Without centralised rules, legislative divergence is becoming the norm; if aggressive, extraterritorial approaches such as Angola's draft are widely adopted, the sub-region risks a chaotic regulatory patchwork in place of interoperability, just as Africa's AI market is projected to expand rapidly through 2030 [1].

P8: Implementation & Impact

Implementation (0.72) exposes the stark divide between ambitious policy design and practical governance. Even well-resourced leaders face significant hurdles, evidenced by South Africa's withdrawal of its 2026 draft policy over fabricated citations [10, 11]. Strong drafted strategies lack disbursed budgets and M&E frameworks; sectoral starts, such as health AI frameworks, have not yet scaled to national integration; and foundational states are forced to govern AI through broad digital laws without the capacity to assess actual deployments. Because regulators cannot inspect algorithms or enforce automated-decision safeguards, sub-regional AI 'impact' remains a theoretical projection, still unmeasured in practice.

Country Spotlight: Mauritius

Within Southern Africa, Mauritius is the clearest proof that small states can lead through governance, without scale. Building on its pioneering 2018 policy, the country launched the 'AI for Mauritius' strategy (2025–2029) and its FAIR Guidelines in April 2026 [24]. The framework is deliberately border-agnostic and vendor-neutral. Any AI system used in the country is held to the same ethical standards, with mandatory bias audits targeting high-risk sectors such as fintech. Adopting a 'boutique regulator' model, Mauritius has not rushed into rigid legislation; instead it has integrated these non-binding principles into government procurement to lay the groundwork for future law. This approach earned Mauritius the top position in sub-Saharan Africa on the 2024 Government AI Readiness Index (53.94/100) [33], and it tops the sub- regional composite in this Index. Its remaining challenge is the one it shares with every neighbour, converting ambitious principles into funded, measurable action, visible in an Implementation & Impact score that still trails its Strategy & Vision score by more than a point and a half [1].

Image credit: Mauritius GIS

Key Data Points

- Southern Africa records the continent's highest sub-regional averages on Infrastructure & Data (1.72) and Ethics & Inclusion (1.48), and the second-highest overall composite (1.49) [1].
- No state in the sub-region has a dedicated, in-force AI Act; Angola's comprehensive draft, extraterritorial and risk-based, is the most advanced but remains unenacted [1].
- Average regional internet penetration is approximately 59.8% (3G population coverage approximately 88.4%), with the widest infrastructure gaps among landlocked members [1].
- Zambia's AI ecosystem comprises approximately 45 startups and US$150 million in funding; women constitute roughly 28% of its tech workforce [1].

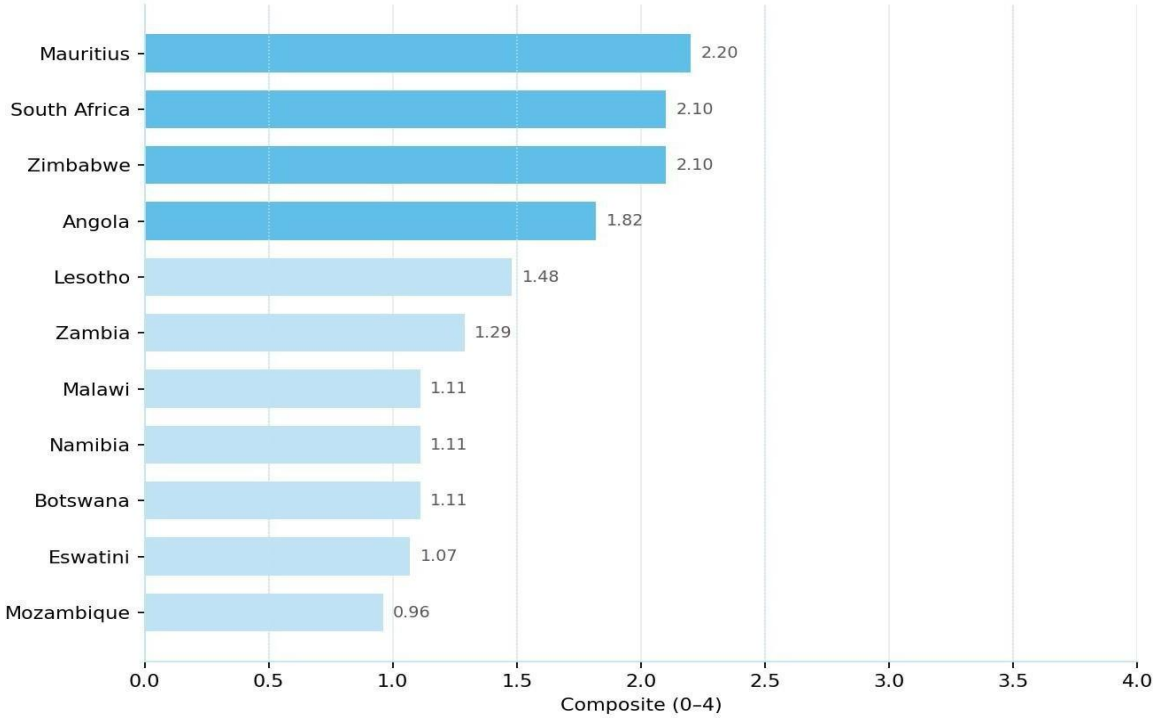


Figure 3.5: Southern Africa composite scores, eleven assessed states (0–4 scale). Colour steps are the published maturity bands (Appendix A.9). Data: AAIGI Regional Summary workbook [1].

Table 3.10: Southern Africa, country composite scores (0–4 scale) [1].

Country	Composite	Country	Composite
Mauritius	2.20	Malawi	1.11
South Africa	2.10	Namibia	1.11
Zimbabwe	2.10	Botswana	1.11
Angola	1.82	Eswatini	1.07
Lesotho	1.48	Mozambique	0.96
Zambia	1.29		

4. **Index Finding:** Phase 1 Alignment with the AU Continental AI Strategy

This chapter reports one of the Index's central findings, the degree to which Phase 1 of the AU Continental AI Strategy has translated into national strategies, institutions, regulation, and budgets. The assessment is derived from the Index's own pillar data in Chapters 2 and 3, read against the continental instruments the Strategy relies on.

Chapter Highlights

- **Strategy diffusion is the strongest Phase 1 deliverable.** Roughly 15 states have adopted national AI frameworks and some 24 more are drafting, but most remain declarative and unfunded.
- **The institutional layer is the least mature element.** The Africa AI Council has since convened, but the proposed US$60 billion Africa AI Fund was not yet publicly documented as capitalised.

1. The Phase 1 Assessment Lens

The African Union's Continental AI Strategy, endorsed by the Executive Council in July 2024, sets out a phased implementation logic running from 2025 to 2030 [2]. Phase 1 (2025–2026) is earmarked for governance frameworks, national strategy development, resource mobilisation, and capacity building [3]. This is the period in which member states are expected to adopt aligned national strategies, designate focal institutions, and build the regulatory and human foundations on which the later phase depends. The Index's pillar architecture maps directly onto this logic. Strategy & Vision (P1) measures the strategy-adoption milestone; Regional Integration (P7) measures participation in the continental architecture; and Implementation & Impact (P8) measures whether Phase 1 commitments have hardened into funded, staffed, and monitored action. This chapter reads the Index's data as a Phase 1 progress report.

2. National Strategy Alignment

On the strategy-adoption milestone, Phase 1 is broadly on track in quantity and behind in quality. Roughly 15 states have adopted national AI frameworks and approximately 24 more are drafting policies or concluding readiness assessments [1, 3], meaning that more than two-thirds of AU member states are engaged in the strategy process the Continental Strategy calls for. Alignment is more than rhetorical. The strategies assessed in Chapter 3 are, in the leading cases, explicitly modelled on the Continental Strategy and UNESCO's Readiness Assessment Methodology [2, 13], and the Index's P1 indicator on AU alignment scores this directly.

The quality deficit appears one layer down. Almost none of the adopted strategies carry dedicated budget lines, measurable targets with dates, or monitoring frameworks, which is why P1 averages (1.44 to 2.25 across sub-regions) sit far above P8 averages (0.65 to 1.04) everywhere [1]. Phase 1's first milestone is being met on paper at a pace its second and third milestones are not.

4.3 The Institutional Architecture

The Continental Strategy's institutional layer is the least mature element of Phase 1. The Africa Declaration on AI, adopted at the inaugural Global AI Summit on Africa in Kigali in April 2025, called for the establishment of an Africa AI Council and proposed a US$60 billion Africa AI Fund [4]. The Council has since convened; the Fund, however, had not been publicly documented as capitalised within the assessment window [1]. At national level, focal institutions mostly exist as decrees, shells, or units folded into ICT ministries; Rwanda's Responsible AI Office, which operates as an established national AI agency [27], and Gabon's CTN-IA [1] are the clearest exceptions. The designation of focal institutions, a core Phase 1 deliverable, is therefore formally advanced and substantively hollow in most states.

4.4 The Regulatory Backbone

The Continental Strategy treats the Malabo Convention as the regulatory backbone on which AI-specific rules will be layered [2]. The Convention entered into force in June 2023 upon receipt of its fifteenth ratification [5, 6], and the Index's P2 data show its footprint. Ratification is scored on every country workbook, and the roster of ratifiers has continued to grow since entry into force, with Rwanda's early ratification (2019) notable in the sub-regional chapters [6]. The backbone remains incomplete in two ways. First, major economies, including Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea in Central Africa and several states elsewhere, remain outside the Convention [6]. Second, ratification without implementing institutions produces the pattern documented throughout Chapter 3, data protection authorities that exist on paper before they are staffed, funded, or accessible to citizens. The regulatory backbone Phase 1 assumes is present in text and absent in enforcement.

5. Sub-regional Operationalisation

Phase 1 anticipates the RECs as transmission mechanisms between continental commitments and national law. The evidence here is the most encouraging in the chapter. The EAC ministers' 2026 Declaration on Artificial Intelligence, adopted in Kigali at the 4th EAC Regional STI Conference and committing Partner States to a Regional AI Technologies Fund [8], together with the launch of the EAC AI Alliance [9] and the validation of a regional EAC AI Strategy (2026–2031) [1], constitutes the continent's first synchronised sub-regional AI governance push and directly operationalises the Continental Strategy's regional-cooperation provisions.

ECOWAS's binding Supplementary Act on Personal Data Protection anchors the continent's highest Regional Integration pillar average (1.51) [20], and SADC's instruments, while non-binding, provide alignment scaffolding [21, 22]. The transmission mechanism's weak link is the final step. No REC framework has yet been converted into national implementing legislation at scale, which is where the Phase 1 chain currently breaks.

6. The Phase 1 Verdict

Measured against its own milestones, Phase 1 at mid-2026 is a story of front-loaded success. The milestones that require documents (strategies, declarations, regional frameworks) are being met ahead of any reasonable expectation for a continent of 54 states. The milestones that require money and staff (funded institutions, enforcement actions, published M&E) are being missed almost universally, and the Index's central empirical finding, the uniform inversion between P1 and P8 in every sub-region, is precisely the signature of that miss [1]. The second edition of this Index will publish year-on-year deltas against these same milestones, converting this chapter from a snapshot into a Phase 1 monitoring instrument, which no other continental mechanism currently provides.

5. Cross-Cutting Themes

The sub-regional analysis reveals a complex, multi-layered landscape. While national contexts vary, from resource-constrained states in Central Africa to dynamic, innovation-heavy hubs in East and West Africa, five critical themes emerge that define the continent's AI trajectory.

1. The Implementation Gap

The most defining constraint across the continent is the widening distance between policy adoption and operational governance, borne out consistently in the Index's own data. Strategy & Vision is the highest-scoring pillar in every sub-region, and Implementation & Impact the lowest, at roughly a third to half the level of strategy in each case [1]. While approximately 15 nations have adopted national AI frameworks and some 24 more are in active drafting stages [1, 3], these documents often remain declarative, with little functional force. The data consistently show a hollowing out of governance. Governments are adept at launching strategies and ratifying high-level instruments such as the Malabo Convention, but frequently do not provide the ring-fenced budgets, technical staffing, or measurable M&E frameworks needed to enforce them. Advanced guidelines, FAIR in Mauritius [24] and Ubuntu-centred ethics in Zimbabwe [25], remain largely non-binding, and regulatory bodies exist on paper long before they are empowered to conduct algorithmic audits. Closing this gap requires shifting from vision-setting to enforcement-building, where the adoption of an AI strategy is immediately accompanied by the statutory funding of independent oversight.

2. Foreign Infrastructure Dependency

Africa's AI aspirations currently run on imported foundations. With the continent holding under 1% of global data-centre capacity while housing 18% of the global population [14], there is systemic reliance on foreign hyperscalers, primarily from the US and China, for cloud services, GPUs, and subsea cables [15]. This creates a governance paradox. These partnerships provide the infrastructure necessary to jump-start local digital economies, but they simultaneously introduce foreign regulatory overhang and erode data sovereignty. As African states increasingly legislate on data localisation, they find themselves in tension with the globalised architecture of their own infrastructure. The challenge for African institutions is to incentivise domestic development, such as the sovereign cloud initiatives seen in the Republic of the Congo and Togo [1], while mitigating the risk of becoming a governance dependency subject to foreign legal and technical frameworks.

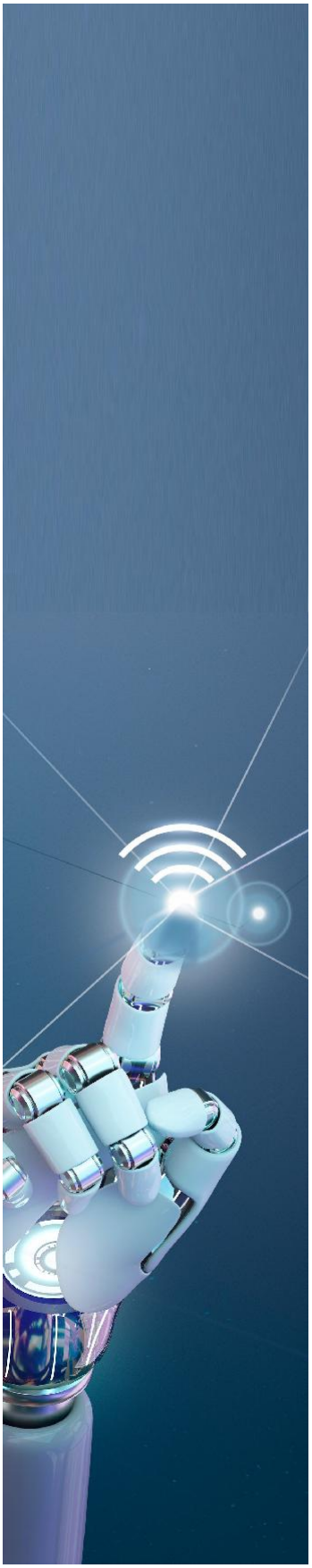
5.3 Capacity as the Binding Constraint

Governance frameworks are only as robust as the institutions that enforce them, and technical and institutional capacity currently acts as the binding constraint on AI adoption. The human capital gap is acute. Africa accounts for only about 3% of global AI talent [16], a figure exacerbated by persistent brain drain and outdated curricula, and Human Capital sub-regional averages range from 0.76 to 1.53, all well below the midpoint of the scale [1]. Beyond specialised talent there is a broader institutional literacy deficit. Judiciaries and regulatory bodies frequently lack the technical training required to interpret algorithmic bias, manage automated decision-making, or assess AI-related harms. Where R&D personnel and specialised regulatory staff are effectively absent, even a well-designed AI law is likely to fail, through the absence of enforcement capability, whatever the quality of its drafting.

5.4 The Emerging Continental Governance Layer

The emergence of a continental governance layer is a nascent but real force. The AU's Continental AI Strategy [2], the Kigali Declaration [4], the emerging Africa AI Council, the EAC's 2026 Declaration on AI and AI Alliance [8, 9], and the active role of RECs such as ECOWAS [20] represent a departure from fragmented, state-by-state isolation, and the pillar data show Regional Integration outperforming domestic regulation in most sub-regions [1]. However, to move from symbolic to systemic influence, these bodies must address the coordination gap. Regional frameworks currently offer guidance without binding authority over national law, producing a regulatory patchwork. For the continental architecture to become functional, it must harmonise standards for cross-border data flows and establish shared mechanisms for AI safety evaluation, ensuring the African voice in global AI governance carries the weight of 54 unified markets instead of 54 disconnected ones.

5.5 AI Labour: The Governance Blind Spot at the Base of the Supply Chain



African data labellers, content moderators, and platform workers sit at the base of the global AI supply chain. They annotate the training data, filter the harmful content, and maintain the systems the world calls artificial intelligence, typically through outsourcing intermediaries, seldom the model developers themselves. The conditions of that work are now extensively documented. Investigative reporting in 2023 found Nairobi-based workers labelling graphic and traumatic content for OpenAI, through the outsourcing firm Sama, for take-home pay of roughly US$1.32 to US$2 per hour [36]; close to 200 former moderators are pursuing litigation in Kenyan courts against Sama and Meta over the psychological toll of that work [38]; and in March 2024 the annotation platform Remotasks, operated by Scale AI, abruptly terminated access for its entire workforce in Kenya, Nigeria, and Pakistan, locking workers out of accounts and pending pay without notice [37]. Worker advocates note the pattern that follows scrutiny. When organising or regulatory pressure rises in one jurisdiction, the work relocates to another, and the platform-as-contractor model keeps the commissioning firm at arm's length from any duty of care [38].

The Index's own scored data show why this is a governance finding as much as a labour story. The instruments that would protect this workforce are precisely the ones African AI governance has not yet built. Across the 54 country workbooks, the indicators most relevant to algorithmically managed work are among the weakest scored anywhere in the instrument. Requirements for algorithmic impact assessment average 0.68 on the 0-4 scale, with more than half of assessed states scoring zero; bias-audit requirements average 0.56; documented enforcement action by any regulator averages 0.78; and AI labour-transition policy averages 1.04, with 38 of 54 states below the 'formal instrument' anchor. Citizen redress for AI-related harms, the strongest of the group at 1.67, still leaves 22 states without even a partially established mechanism, and where redress exists it typically runs through general data protection channels never designed for account deactivation, task allocation, or algorithmic pay-setting [1]. In short, the workers most intensively managed by algorithms on the continent are, on the Index's evidence, the least protected from them.

Table 5.1: Worker-relevant indicators, continental aggregates across the 54 country workbooks [1]. Anchor 2 denotes a formal instrument that exists but is partially implemented (Appendix A.4).

Workbook indicator	What it measures	Continental mean (0-4)	States below 2 ('formal instrument' anchor)
E6.2 Bias audit requirements	Whether AI bias audits are required for high-risk systems	0.56	47 of 54
E6.1 Algorithmic impact assessment	Whether algorithmic impact assessments are required	0.68	45 of 54
G2.8 Enforcement actions taken	Documented enforcement, sanctions, or compliance action	0.78	42 of 54
H4.8 Labour transition policy	Existence of an AI labour-transition policy	1.04	38 of 54
E6.5 Judicial AI remedy	Availability of judicial remedy for AI-related harms	1.24	32 of 54
E6.4 Citizen redress mechanism	Citizen redress mechanisms for automated or AI-related harms	1.67	22 of 54

Note: Indicator codes are the identifiers used in the published country workbooks [1].

The same silence runs through the strategy layer. National AI strategies across the continent engage AI as an economic opportunity, a skills agenda, and a sovereignty question, but the Index's strategy tracking found the working conditions of data-labelling, content-moderation, and platform work largely absent from the assessed policy texts, and no assessed state scored evidence of binding safeguards specific to platform or data work [1]. The handful of states with any scored labour-transition provision (Nigeria, Rwanda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho reach the 'established' anchor on that single indicator) address AI's effect on employment in general terms, without reaching the contracting structures that hold data workers outside formal employment protection. Kenya illustrates the gap most sharply. It hosts the continent's densest concentration of documented cases, scores among the leaders on labour-transition policy, and still leaves the workers in those cases reliant on a twenty-year-old labour code and general data protection law while its Artificial Intelligence Bill remains before the Senate [28, 38].

The ground for closing this gap shifted inside the Index's assessment window. On 12 June 2026, the International Labour Conference adopted Convention No. 193 concerning Decent Work in the Platform Economy, the first binding international standard written for this work [34]. The Convention applies to platform workers whether or not they hold an employment relationship, ties employment status to the facts of the working relationship rather than to contract wording, sets safeguards on algorithmic management, including human review of decisions such as suspension and account deactivation, and pulls intermediaries and cross-border operators inside its scope, entering into force twelve months after the second ratification [34, 35].

Read against the indicator evidence above, the Convention supplies almost exactly the instruments the continental scorecard shows to be missing. No African state had ratified it as of the 30 June 2026 evidence cut-off, which makes ratification, and the national implementing measures that would turn its text into protection, one of the clearest and most measurable governance opportunities this Index identifies. The second edition will score ratification and implementation of Convention No. 193 within the Governance & Regulation and Regional Integration pillars, converting this finding into a tracked commitment.

6. Recommendations

To bridge the gap between Africa's high-level AI ambitions and operational reality, governance must shift from strategic declarations to enforceable, funded, and accountable mechanisms.

For African Governments

- **Move from strategy to statutory funding.** National AI strategies are insufficient without budgets. Governments should earmark statutory funding for independent AI oversight authorities, ensuring they have the technical mandate and resources for enforcement.
- **Operationalise enforcement.** Establish mandatory AI incident-reporting protocols and clear legal liability frameworks. Legislation should transition from broad data-privacy law to specific mandates requiring algorithmic impact assessments for high-risk public-sector deployments.
- **Protect the AI workforce.** Ratify and implement ILO Convention No. 193 on decent work in the platform economy, and extend national AI strategies to cover the conditions of data-labelling, content-moderation, and platform work, including employment-status tests grounded in the facts of the working relationship and human review of suspension and deactivation decisions [34].

For the African Union and Regional Economic Communities

- **Enforce harmonisation.** To prevent a fragmented regulatory patchwork, the AU should prioritise operationalising the Malabo Convention for data governance and developing AI-specific regional protocols for algorithmic accountability, safety evaluation, and cross-border deployment.
- **Coordinate oversight.** RECs should develop regional safety sandboxes that allow member states to share the cost and expertise required for algorithmic audits, ensuring smaller economies are not left to face complex regulatory challenges in isolation.
- **Harmonise AI-labour standards.** Develop model provisions for African ratification and implementation of ILO Convention No. 193, so that platform and data-work protections are harmonised across jurisdictions and the relocation of work in response to scrutiny in any single state ceases to be a viable avoidance strategy [34].
- **Bargain compute for minerals.** Advanced-chip export controls leave most African states dependent on discretionary access to the accelerators frontier AI requires, while the continent supplies inputs the AI hardware economy cannot do without: roughly 70% of mined cobalt from the DRC alone, leading shares of manganese, platinum-group metals, and chromium, and around 30% of global critical-mineral reserves [41, 42]. Building on the AU's 2025 Green Minerals Strategy, the AU and RECs should negotiate as a bloc, tying mineral-supply and beneficiation agreements to guaranteed compute access, technology transfer, and local refining capacity. Deals concluded state by state under pressure concede this leverage; a common negotiating framework preserves it.

For Global Forums, Including the UN Dialogue

- **Mandate meaningful representation.** Africa's participation in global AI governance must move beyond consultative roles. African stakeholders should help lead the design of international binding instruments, ensuring they account for regional infrastructure disparities and developmental needs.
- **Commit real capacity.** Global forums should prioritise concrete technology transfers, particularly access to compute capacity and open-source models, moving beyond regulatory advice and theoretical frameworks.

For Development Finance Institutions

- **Condition finance on governance.** Future digital-infrastructure investments (data centres, sovereign cloud hubs) should include governance conditionality, with funding contingent on demonstrated progress toward independent oversight and data-protection safeguards.
- **Fund accountability directly.** DFIs should earmark a fixed percentage of infrastructure investment for the creation of local AI safety audit bodies, treating governance as a fundamental component of critical infrastructure, not an optional add-on.

For Civil Society and Researchers

- **Audit independently.** Build specialised watchdog capacity to perform independent algorithmic audits, focusing on public-sector bias and state-sponsored digital surveillance.
- **Localise AI literacy.** Bridge the language deficit by prioritising AI governance documentation and digital-rights training in African languages, ensuring civil-society participation is not limited to English, French, or Portuguese speakers.

7. Conclusion

The evidence assembled in this inaugural report, now covering all 54 African states across 4,320 scored indicators, suggests Africa is no longer waiting to be governed by external standards; it is actively constructing a home-grown AI governance architecture, although implementation remains uneven and often weak. By integrating continental frameworks such as the AU Continental AI Strategy with nuanced national efforts, the continent is defining its own path toward a secure and inclusive digital future. The Index's central finding is equally clear. The binding constraint has shifted from vision to delivery. Every sub-region has learned to write strategy faster than it has learned to fund, staff, and enforce it. The Africa AI Governance Index serves as both a measure of where this project stands today and a foundational contribution to its evolution. As Africa shifts from ambition to implementation, this Index aims to provide the clarity, accountability, and direction required to turn potential into progress.

Appendix A: Methodology of the Africa AI Governance Index 2026

This appendix explains how the Africa AI Governance Index (AAIGI) 2026 was constructed, scored, reviewed, and aggregated. Its purpose is to make the Index transparent, reproducible, and open to scrutiny. The AAIGI is designed as a composite governance-readiness index. It assesses the extent to which African states have developed the strategic, legal, institutional, infrastructural, human-capital, innovation, ethical, regional, and implementation conditions required for responsible AI governance. The Index does not claim to measure the absolute quality of AI systems deployed in each country. Rather, it measures observable governance preparedness based on publicly available evidence such as official documents, legal instruments, institutional records, regional frameworks, expert review, and documented implementation activity. This appendix consolidates the assessment framework applied in this inaugural edition with the fuller methodological protocol prepared for the AAIGI multi-stakeholder validation process.

1. Unit of Analysis and Reporting Period

The unit of analysis is the sovereign state. All 54 African states are assessed individually and then grouped into the five UNECA sub-regions for comparative interpretation (Section 1.3). The reporting period for the 2026 edition covers evidence available up to 30 June 2026. Evidence published after the cut-off date does not affect the 2026 scores, although it may be noted qualitatively where relevant. Where a legal instrument, strategy, institution, or programme was announced before the cut-off date but not yet formally adopted, operationalised, funded, or implemented, it is scored according to its actual status at the time of assessment, not according to stated future intentions.

2. Pillars and Weights

The AAIGI is organised around eight pillars. The first four pillars are weighted at 15% each because they represent foundational governance capacity; the latter four are weighted at 10% each because they reflect ecosystem maturity, ethical safeguards, regional alignment, and implementation.

Table A.1: Pillar weights.

Pillar	Weight
P1. Strategy & Vision	15%
P2. Governance & Regulation	15%
P3. Infrastructure & Data	15%
P4. Human Capital	15%

Pillar	Weight
P5. Innovation & Ecosystem	10%
P6. Ethics & Inclusion	10%
P7. Regional Integration	10%
P8. Implementation & Impact	10%
Total	**100%**

The heavier weighting of the first four pillars reflects their status as enabling preconditions. A state cannot regulate, include, integrate, or implement what it has not first envisioned, legislated, connected, and staffed. Strategy provides direction; law provides authority; infrastructure provides the physical substrate on which AI systems run; and human capital provides the capacity to operate all three. The latter four pillars are treated as expressions of governance maturity that build upon, and are empirically constrained by, those foundations. This 60/40 split also mirrors the AU Continental AI Strategy's Phase 1 emphasis on foundational strategy-setting, institution-building, and capacity formation [2, 3]. The weighting was debated and adopted by the coordination team at the design stage, before any scoring took place, to prevent weight selection from being influenced by observed results.

A.3 Indicator Framework

Each country is scored on 80 indicators, ten per pillar, contained in the standardised country data-collection workbook published alongside this report [1]. Each workbook indicator is scored against explicit rubric anchors and must be accompanied by written evidence and source citations, making the full scoring trail auditable. Table A.2 summarises the core indicator domains each pillar covers.

Table A.2: Core indicator domains by pillar. The ten workbook indicators within each pillar operationalise these domains; the full 80-indicator instrument, with per-indicator anchors and evidence fields, is contained in the published country workbooks [1].

Pillar	Core indicator domains
P1 Strategy & Vision	National AI strategy or equivalent framework; formal adoption status; alignment with the AU Continental AI Strategy, Malabo Convention, and UNESCO frameworks; measurable targets and milestones; stakeholder consultation in strategy development.
P2 Governance & Regulation	Data protection law; operational data protection authority; AI-specific legislation, bills, or binding guidance; regulator mandate over automated decision-making and algorithmic accountability; documented enforcement and compliance action; Malabo Convention ratification or equivalent regional instruments.
P3 Infrastructure & Data	Connectivity and internet penetration; submarine-cable and fibre-backbone access; local data centres and sovereign cloud; access to AI compute; public-sector datasets and open data; data localisation and cross-border transfer rules.

Pillar	Core indicator domains
P4 Human Capital	Higher-education AI programmes; dedicated AI research centres and labs; research output and patents; AI governance, ethics, and legal expertise; public-sector and judicial capacity building; local-language and culturally relevant data in AI research.
P5 Innovation & Ecosystem	AI startups, hubs, and accelerators; AI-focused funding and venture capital; university-industry partnerships and applied pilots; regulatory sandboxes and testbeds; AI applications in priority sectors; AI safety, audit, and assurance capacity.
P6 Ethics & Inclusion	National AI ethics principles and responsible-AI frameworks; transparency, explainability, and human-oversight requirements; algorithmic impact assessments and bias audits; citizen redress for AI-related harms; inclusion of women, youth, rural communities, persons with disabilities, and linguistic minorities; safeguards against surveillance abuse and misuse.
P7 Regional Integration	Participation in AU AI governance processes; REC-level digital, cyber, and data initiatives; Malabo alignment; cross-border data governance and interoperability commitments; regional summits, networks, and expert groups; regional cooperation on AI safety, standards, and infrastructure.
P8 Implementation & Impact	Funded implementation plans and ring-fenced budgets; operational oversight bodies; published monitoring and evaluation; implemented governance measures in public-sector deployments; enforcement, compliance monitoring, and procurement safeguards; measurable outcomes attributable to AI governance.

A.4 Scoring Scale and Rules for Extreme Values

Each indicator is scored on a 0–4 scale. The scale is ordinal but treated as approximately interval for purposes of aggregation; this assumption is common in composite governance indices but should be interpreted cautiously. Scores represent observed governance maturity, not normative approval.

Table A.3: The 0–4 scoring anchors.

Score	Anchor	Interpretation
0	No confirmed evidence	No official, credible, or independently verifiable evidence was found. This includes cases where the issue may exist informally but could not be confirmed.
1	Nascent / announced	Early discussion, announcement, consultation, draft, pilot, or informal activity exists, but no formal adoption or operational mechanism is confirmed.

Table A.3: The 0–4 scoring anchors.

Score	Anchor	Interpretation
2	Emerging / partially established	A formal law, policy, institution, programme, or initiative exists, but implementation is partial, underfunded, fragmented, or not yet independently verifiable.
3	Established / operational	The relevant framework or institution is formally adopted and operational, with some evidence of implementation, staffing, activity, or public reporting.
4	Advanced / fully operational	The framework is formally adopted, funded, implemented, monitored, and supported by evidence of enforcement, measurable outcomes, or sustained institutional practice.

Extreme scores require a higher evidentiary standard. A score of 0 is assigned only where researchers made a reasonable search and found no confirmed evidence; it does not mean 'not researched' or 'unknown'. Where evidence is uncertain, the correct treatment is to flag the case as 'insufficient evidence' rather than automatically scoring 0. A score of 4 is assigned only where the relevant measure is both formally established and operational, funded, implemented, and supported by evidence of use or impact; announced strategies, draft laws, unfunded authorities, and non-binding ethics guidelines do not receive a 4. The rubric is deliberately calibrated to reward binding, operational governance over declaratory activity. In particular, the absence of enforceable AI law and non-ratification of the Malabo Convention are penalised by design. Where this calibration produces scores that diverge from individual fellows' own country assessments, the rubric-calibrated score is retained to preserve cross-country comparability.

A.5 Aggregation Formulas

Because all indicators use the same 0–4 scale, no external rescaling is required before aggregation; all calculations are performed directly on the raw 0–4 scores. Each pillar score is the arithmetic mean of the valid indicator scores within that pillar: $P(c,i) = (1/m) \times \Sigma S(c,i,j)$, where $P(c,i)$ is the score of country c on pillar i, $S(c,i,j)$ is the raw indicator score, and m is the number of valid indicators scored under that pillar. Indicators within a pillar are equally weighted because the instrument was designed so that each captures a distinct, comparably significant facet of that pillar, and because no defensible empirical basis existed in this inaugural cycle for differentiating indicator-level weights.

The composite is a weighted additive model on the same 0–4 scale: $AAIGI(c) = \Sigma w(i) \times P(c,i)$, with $w = (0.15, 0.15, 0.15, 0.15, 0.10, 0.10, 0.10, 0.10)$. Regional averages are the unweighted arithmetic mean of country composites within the stated UNECA grouping: $\text{Regional Average}(r) = (1/n) \times \Sigma AAIGI(c)$, where n is the number of countries in the sub-region. Because sub-regions contain different numbers of countries, cross-regional comparisons in this report rely on regional averages rather than cumulative totals. If population-weighted or GDP-weighted averages are used in any future edition, they will be reported separately and clearly labelled. All pillar, composite, and regional values are computed by live formulas in the published workbooks rather than manual entry [1].

A.6 Missing-Data Treatment

The AAIGI distinguishes between four categories of missing or incomplete evidence, handled conservatively and transparently. Where an indicator could not be scored from available evidence, the pillar score was computed as the mean of the available indicators for that pillar rather than imputing a value, and the gap was recorded in the workbook.

Table A.4: Missing-data categories and treatment.

Category	Definition	Treatment
Confirmed absence	A reasonable evidence search found no official or credible evidence that the item exists.	Score 0.
Insufficient evidence	Evidence may exist, but could not be verified within the reporting period.	Mark as missing and flag for verification. Do not automatically score 0.
Announced but not adopted	A strategy, law, institution, or programme has been announced or drafted but not formally adopted.	Usually score 1, unless implementation evidence supports a higher score.
Adopted but not operational	A law, authority, strategy, or framework exists formally but lacks staffing, budget, implementation, reporting, or enforcement.	Usually score 2, unless operational evidence supports a higher score.

Where more than 25% of indicators in a pillar are missing for a country, the pillar score is flagged as low-confidence. Where more than 25% of all country indicators are missing, the country composite is reported with a confidence warning.

A.7 Data Sources and Evidence Hierarchy

Evidence was collected by in-country fellows using the standardised workbook. The Index relies on secondary, publicly available and verifiable sources, without primary fieldwork, drawing on official government documents (strategies, statutes, gazettes, regulatory decisions), AU and REC instruments, UNESCO Readiness Assessment reports, UNECA and UNDP assessments, the Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index, peer-reviewed literature, and credible journalistic and industry sources. Every scored indicator is linked to its supporting evidence and citation, and workbook evidence entries record the source, the date of the evidence, and the date of access, so that time-sensitive figures (company counts, rankings, ratification rosters) can be re-verified as they change; this makes the full scoring trail auditable [1]. Scores are based on the strongest available evidence, in the following order of preference: (1) official laws, gazettes, regulations, and other official government documents; (2) AU, REC, and UN-system instruments; (3) international indices and peer-reviewed literature; and (4) credible journalistic and industry sources.

8. Rater Protocol, Quality Assurance, and Reliability

Each country was assessed using the standardised workbook, which records for every indicator the raw score, evidence source, date of evidence, a short justification, and notes on uncertainty or disputed evidence. Researchers followed a common procedure: a structured evidence search for each indicator; recording of all sources; assignment of a preliminary score against the 0–4 anchors; a one- to two-sentence justification for every score; flagging of uncertain cases for secondary review; and submission to the regional lead.

Quality assurance in this edition operated at four levels. First, the standardised workbook itself enforces structural consistency, providing identical indicators, rubric anchors, and evidence fields for every country, with pillar and composite scores computed by live formulas, with no manual entry. Second, every completed workbook was programmatically recalculated and scanned; a zero-formula-error standard was enforced across all 54 workbooks, and residual-data scans were run to detect any content carried over between country files. Third, regional coordinators reviewed fellow submissions for rubric fidelity and cross-checked scores against the documented evidence; where a fellow's judgment diverged from the rubric anchors, the disagreement was resolved by returning to the evidence and applying the anchor definitions, with the coordinator's rubric-calibrated score prevailing and the divergence noted. Fourth, the coordination team conducted a final cross-regional consistency review to ensure equivalent evidence received equivalent scores across sub-regions, including review of extreme (0 and 4) scores and verification of legal-status and regional-membership claims against official AU and REC lists.

Formal statistical inter-rater reliability testing was not conducted in this inaugural cycle; the resource cost of duplicate-scoring 4,320 country-indicator observations was judged prohibitive for a first edition. The rubric-anchor design, coordinator review, and cross-regional consistency checks serve as the interim reliability safeguards. For the second edition, at least 20% of countries in each sub-region will be double-scored by a second reviewer, prioritising countries with high strategic importance, unusual scores, extreme values, or contested evidence, with adjudication of score differences greater than one point, and formal reliability statistics will be reported. One country-specific caveat applies in this edition. Eritrea's workbook was completed through desk research after the originally submitted file was found to contain another country's data; its scores are analyst-assigned rather than fellow-verified and should be read with corresponding caution [1].

9. Maturity Bands

Composite scores are grouped into five maturity bands, used in the continental table (Chapter 2) and the figures throughout this report. The two outermost bands are deliberately narrower, each spanning half a point, reserving the extremes of the scale for clearly documented absence at one end and funded, monitored, outcome-producing governance at the other; the three middle bands each span a full point, the intervals within which most states currently sit.

Table A.5: Published maturity bands.

Band	Composite range	Interpretation
Minimal or absent	0.00–0.49	No meaningful documented AI governance activity.
Nascent	0.50–1.49	Early announcements, drafts, or isolated initiatives without formal adoption.
Developing	1.50–2.49	Formal instruments exist; implementation is partial, underfunded, or fragmented.
Established	2.50–3.49	Adopted, operational frameworks with early evidence of application.
Advanced	3.50–4.00	Funded, monitored frameworks producing measurable, verifiable outcomes.

A.10 Sensitivity Analysis

Because composite results can be affected by weighting choices, the AAIGI tests whether scores and orderings are robust to alternative weighting schemes. Five checks are specified: (1) equal weights, with all eight pillars at 12.5%, testing dependence on the 60/40 design; (2) implementation-heavy weighting, raising Governance & Regulation to 17.5% and Implementation & Impact to 15% while lowering Strategy & Vision to 10%, testing whether strategy-strong but delivery-weak states fall when delivery is prioritised; (3) institutional-foundations weighting, raising Governance & Regulation, Infrastructure & Data, and Human Capital to 17.5% each; (4) exclusion of low-confidence indicators, recalculating pillar scores from medium- and high-confidence indicators only; and (5) an extreme-score audit, in which all 0 and 4 scores are reviewed and replaced with conservative alternatives where the evidence is insufficient, before recalculation. In this inaugural edition, checks under scenarios (1) to (3) confirmed that sub-regional orderings are robust to moderate weight perturbations, since the pillars are positively correlated within countries; country-level rankings are more sensitive at the margins, which is one reason the report instructs readers not to over-interpret composite differences smaller than roughly 0.1. Scenarios (4) and (5) are specified as standing protocol for subsequent editions as confidence coding matures.

11. Confidence Ratings

Country scores are read alongside a three-level confidence rating: high, where a score is supported by official or multiple credible sources with limited ambiguity; medium, where a score is supported by credible evidence but some implementation details remain uncertain; and low, where a score depends on limited, dated, indirect, or single-source evidence. Confidence ratings leave the numerical score unchanged and instead guide interpretation: a country with a high score and low confidence should not be presented as definitively more advanced than a country with a slightly lower score and high confidence.

12. Interpretation and Limitations

AAIGI scores should be interpreted as governance-readiness estimates, not as absolute judgments of national AI performance. A higher score indicates stronger documented evidence of AI governance preparedness; it does not necessarily mean that AI systems in the country are safe, inclusive, rights-respecting, or effectively regulated in practice. The report prioritises score bands and regional patterns over narrow rank differences.

- **Temporal validity.** The AI policy landscape is moving rapidly; scores reflect the evidence available at the time of assessment (through 30 June 2026) and may be quickly overtaken by events.
- **Documentation bias.** The Index depends on documented, publicly verifiable evidence. States with weaker documentation cultures or restricted information environments may be under-scored relative to their actual practice, and informal governance is difficult to capture.
- **Secondary-data reliance.** All evidence was drawn from secondary, publicly available sources; no primary fieldwork was conducted or direct institutional access; findings therefore inherit the coverage and accuracy limits of the underlying documentation.
- **Language and access constraints.** Evidence in African languages and in non-digitised formats is harder to retrieve, which may compound documentation bias in some states.
- **Single-scorer risk.** Most indicators were scored by a single primary analyst and validated by review rather than independently duplicate-scored; residual scorer effects cannot be fully excluded.

- **Interpretive compression.** Pillar and composite scores compress heterogeneous realities into single numbers. They are entry points for the qualitative analysis in the regional chapters, not substitutes for it, and small composite differences between countries should not be over-interpreted.

- **Scale limits.** The 0–4 scale simplifies complex institutional realities and should not be over-interpreted as a precise interval measure; legal adoption does not necessarily imply implementation, and implementation does not necessarily imply effectiveness.

A.13 Disclosure Statement

AAIGI scores are based on documented evidence available during the reporting period. The Index uses a 0–4 scoring scale across eight weighted pillars. Scores reflect the maturity of observable AI governance frameworks and implementation capacity; they do not measure the safety, legality, or social impact of all AI systems deployed in a country. Where evidence was unavailable or uncertain, scores were treated according to the missing-data protocol described in this appendix. Narrow score differences should be interpreted cautiously.

References

Claims derived from the Index's own scored evidence base cite the published country workbooks and regional summary [1], where every indicator score is linked to its underlying source and citation. External headline claims cite the numbered sources below. All URLs were last accessed on 30 June 2026 unless otherwise dated.

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AFRICA AI GOVERNANCE INDEX
Inaugural Report · 2026 Edition

The Africa AI Governance Index (AAIGI) is the inaugural continental benchmark for artificial intelligence governance, designed and researched by African experts across all 54 states. Built on 80 indicators across eight weighted pillars, it measures how strategy, law, infrastructure, skills, innovation, ethics, regional integration, and implementation combine into working governance, and where the gap between ambition and delivery remains widest.

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