

Global Compensation for Nigerian AI Engineers: A Market-Driven Analysis for Remote Roles

I. Executive Summary: Understanding Global Compensation for Nigerian AI Talent

This report provides a comprehensive, data-backed analysis to illustrate that Artificial Intelligence (AI) engineers based in Nigeria, when working remotely for international organizations, typically earn significantly above \$4,000 USD per month on average. The aim is to offer robust references and a clear understanding of market dynamics to inform compensation discussions, particularly when local Nigerian market statistics might be considered.

Understanding Compensation Model Differences

There is a notable difference between the compensation structures offered by local Nigerian companies and those provided by international entities for remote AI engineering positions. While salaries within Nigeria's domestic market, even for highly skilled tech roles, tend to be comparatively lower due to specific local economic factors, the landscape for remote international employment operates under different principles. This creates distinct market segments within Nigeria's tech sector, where "Nigerian statistics" should be considered in the context of the employer's origin and compensation philosophy. For instance, local IT professional salaries generally range from 147,871 NGN to 933,517 NGN monthly gross ¹, which, at an approximate exchange rate of 1500 NGN to 1 USD, translates to roughly \$98 to \$622 USD per month. Even projected annual salaries for AI and Machine Learning Engineers in Nigeria by 2025, ranging from NGN 10 million to NGN 12 million ² or NGN 18-20 million ³, convert to approximately \$778 to \$1,111 USD per month. In contrast, remote roles for Nigerian talent with international organizations consistently show annual salaries well above

\$48,000 USD, or \$4,000 USD per month.⁴

Remote Roles Reflect Global Value

International organizations engaging Nigerian AI engineers for remote positions generally align compensation with global talent markets rather than solely localized Nigerian ones. This approach often results in average annual salaries for such roles ranging from \$53,000 to over \$100,000 USD, translating to monthly earnings that substantially exceed the \$4,000 USD threshold. This is often a strategic decision by international organizations, recognizing that high-skill tech talent is globally accessible in a remote environment. Their primary competition for this talent is international, not confined to Nigeria's local market. Crossover, a platform actively hiring remote AI engineers from Nigeria, clearly states that "Pay is set based on global value, not the local market".⁴ This global compensation philosophy is further supported by data from other global remote platforms like Arc.dev, which reports average annual salaries for remote Software Engineers and Data Scientists in Nigeria at \$53,658 and \$55,611 respectively⁵, and Himalayas.app, which indicates an average remote employee salary in Nigeria of \$73,000 USD per year.⁸ These figures are significantly closer to typical US remote AI engineer salaries, which average around \$101,752 annually⁹, than to purely local Nigerian rates.

Conclusion

The evidence presented consistently demonstrates that experienced AI engineers from Nigeria, when engaged by international remote organizations, are compensated at rates reflecting their global market value. These compensation levels generally surpass the \$4,000 USD monthly threshold, establishing a clear precedent for globally competitive remuneration in such roles.

II. Introduction: Navigating Global Compensation in a Remote-First World

The Evolving Landscape of Remote Work

The advent and rapid expansion of remote work have fundamentally reshaped global labor markets. This paradigm shift enables organizations to access diverse talent pools irrespective of their geographical headquarters, simultaneously empowering professionals to secure opportunities that transcend the limitations of their physical location. This evolving landscape directly influences traditional, localized compensation models that were once primarily tied to the cost of living or specific economic conditions of a physical locale.

While remote work adoption in Nigeria (17% of jobs) still trails global averages (28%)¹⁰, this indicates that the opportunity for remote international engagement remains a selective niche within the country. Skilled tech professionals who successfully engage in these global remote opportunities are part of a distinguished group. Their ability to bridge geographical and market gaps, connecting local talent to global demand, often commands a premium. This distinction underscores that the value proposition of such roles is not merely about local labor costs but about accessing and leveraging specialized skills in a globally competitive environment.

The Context: Bridging Local and Global Salary Expectations

The situation where a skilled AI engineer in Nigeria encounters a compensation offer from an international organization benchmarked against local Nigerian statistics is a common point of discussion in the contemporary global labor market. This approach may not fully account for the global demand for highly specialized AI talent and the inherent value proposition that remote work brings to both the organization and the employee.

An organization's consideration of local Nigerian statistics, despite being an international entity, might be interpreted as an attempt to leverage labor cost differentials without fully acknowledging the global market value of specialized skills. This practice can sometimes lead to challenges related to "location-based

discrimination," as reported by Nigerian freelancers and remote workers.¹⁰ The purpose of this report is to systematically address this perspective, providing the necessary insights to advocate for fair compensation aligned with global remote work standards.

Purpose of the Report

This report aims to provide a comprehensive, data-backed analysis demonstrating that Nigerian AI engineers working for remote international organizations typically earn significantly above \$4,000 USD per month. It supports this assertion with robust market data and an in-depth understanding of global compensation trends, offering a valuable resource for compensation discussions.

III. The Global AI Engineer Market: Benchmarking Compensation

High Demand and Valuation of AI Talent Globally

AI engineering stands as a highly specialized and rapidly evolving field, consistently commanding competitive salaries across major global tech hubs. This pervasive global demand establishes a clear benchmark for what organizations are willing to invest in top-tier AI talent, irrespective of their physical location. The expertise required in machine learning, deep learning, data science, and proficiency in programming languages like Python, TensorFlow, and PyTorch¹¹ is a valuable and sought-after skill set worldwide.

In the United States, for example, the median annual salary for an AI engineer is reported at \$145,080 by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and \$134,023 by Glassdoor.¹² BuiltIn further indicates an average of \$175,262 annually, with an additional \$35,333 in cash compensation.¹³ For remote AI engineers specifically in the US, the average annual salary is \$101,752, which equates to approximately \$8,479 per

month. Even at the 25th percentile, remote AI engineers in the US earn \$84,000 annually, or \$7,000 per month.⁹ Entry-level AI engineers in the US typically start between \$90,000 and \$120,000 annually, while senior professionals can earn \$155,000 to over \$200,000.¹¹ Beyond the US, other developed nations also reflect competitive average salaries for AI engineers: the UK at £56,614, Australia at AUD 154,275, Canada at CAD 101,382, and Germany at €92,434.¹⁴ The consistently competitive salaries observed for AI engineers across various developed countries, including for remote positions, firmly establish a "global market rate" for this skill set. International organizations seeking AI talent, regardless of where the talent is situated, are implicitly operating within this global market and may consider aligning their compensation practices with its standards, rather than solely localized rates.

Factors Influencing High Global Compensation

The elevated compensation for AI engineers globally is influenced by several interconnected factors. First, the **specialized skill set** required in AI engineering, encompassing advanced knowledge in machine learning, deep learning, data science, and specific programming frameworks, is inherently complex and not widely available.¹¹ This scarcity in a high-demand field naturally contributes to its market value.

Second, the **intense market demand** for AI applications across virtually all industries fuels a significant global competition for this specialized talent.² The rapid expansion of AI initiatives, from banking to healthcare, means that the demand for skilled AI engineers often outstrips the available supply, leading to upward pressure on compensation.

Third, the **productivity and value creation** attributed to AI engineers are substantial. Their work directly contributes to innovation, significant efficiency gains, and the development of new, high-impact products and services. This direct translation of their efforts into tangible organizational outcomes suggests a high "marginal product of labor" for organizations operating in large, impactful global markets.¹⁵ While an engineer's marginal product of labor might appear lower when serving only the local Nigerian market due to its smaller consumer base and lower GDP per capita, their contribution to an international organization operating in a much larger, more affluent market (such as the US, with its roughly 330 million people and high GDP per capita) is often significantly higher. This economic principle provides a robust theoretical

foundation for why global organizations may offer globally competitive compensation, irrespective of the engineer's physical location. The value of the labor is primarily tied to the market the organization serves and the impact it generates, not solely to the talent's cost of living or local market conditions.

Table 1: Comparative AI/Tech Engineer Salaries (Annual USD) - Global Benchmarks vs. Nigerian Context

Category	Role	Average Annual Salary (USD)	Source
Global Benchmarks	AI Engineer (United States, Median/Average)	\$145,080 - \$175,262	¹²
	Remote AI Engineer (United States, Average)	\$101,752	⁹
	Entry-Level AI Engineer (United States)	\$90,000 - \$120,000	¹¹
Remote for Nigerian Talent (International Orgs.)	Remote Software Engineer (Arc.dev)	\$53,658	⁵
	Remote Data Scientist (Arc.dev)	\$55,611	⁵
	AI-First Software Engineer II (Crossover)	\$60,000	⁴
	AI-Augmented Full-Stack Principal Engineer (Crossover)	\$100,000	⁴
	Average Remote Employee (Nigeria, Himalayas.app)	\$73,000	⁸
Local Nigerian Companies	AI/ML Engineer (Projected 2025)	\$9,333 - \$13,333 (NGN 14M-20M at	²

		1500 NGN/USD)	
	IT Professional (Monthly Gross, Converted Annual)	\$1,176 - \$7,468 (NGN 147K-933K monthly at 1500 NGN/USD)	¹
	Software Engineer (Average)	\$3,376 (NGN 5,064,000 at 1500 NGN/USD)	¹⁶

This table clearly illustrates the significant compensation differences between local Nigerian tech salaries and those typically commanded by Nigerian AI engineers working for international remote organizations, as well as broader global benchmarks. It helps to demonstrate that "Nigerian statistics" are not uniform across all employment types, highlighting the distinct economic realities of the global remote labor market.

IV. The Nigerian Tech Landscape: Local Realities vs. Global Opportunities

Growth of Nigeria's Tech Sector

Nigeria's digital economy is a dynamic and increasingly vital contributor to its national economic growth. The Information Communication Technology (ICT) sector alone contributed over 19.78% of Nigeria's total GDP in 2024, with projections indicating a rise to \$18.3 billion by 2026.¹⁷ Lagos, as a burgeoning tech hub, saw its startups valued at over \$8.4 billion by the end of 2022.¹⁷ This growth is actively supported by government initiatives, such as the "3 Million Technical Talent Programme" aimed at training professionals by 2027, and substantial investments in fiber infrastructure, including a \$2 billion commitment.² These efforts are fostering a robust and expanding tech ecosystem within the country.

Despite this impressive growth, Nigeria's overall economic scale and consumer base, characterized by a GDP per capita of approximately \$2,000 and a limited consumer base with higher daily spending habits¹⁵, can influence local wage structures, even for

in-demand roles. While the tech sector's expansion creates opportunities, the domestic market's capacity to absorb and compensate highly specialized talent at global rates may be limited, which helps explain why local salaries, even for top tech roles, remain distinct from international benchmarks.

Average Salaries for AI/Tech Professionals in Local Nigerian Companies

Salaries for Information Technology professionals in Nigeria generally range from 147,871 NGN (minimum) to 933,517 NGN (highest average) on a monthly gross basis, including bonuses.¹ When converted at an approximate rate of 1500 NGN to 1 USD, this translates to roughly \$98 to \$622 USD per month.

More specifically for AI and Machine Learning Engineers, Businessday NG reports expected annual earnings between NGN 10 million and NGN 12 million by 2025, or currently between NGN 8 million and NGN 14 million annually.² At the 1500 NGN/USD exchange rate, NGN 14 million annually is approximately \$9,333 USD per year, which equates to about \$778 USD per month. Nucamp indicates even higher figures for AI/ML Engineers in Nigeria, suggesting they can earn between NGN 18 million and NGN 20 million yearly, making them among the highest-paid tech professionals locally.³ At the same exchange rate, NGN 20 million annually is approximately \$13,333 USD per year, or about \$1,111 USD per month.

Even other high-paying local engineering jobs outside of AI, such as Petroleum Engineering (NGN 5,824,000 per year) or Software Engineering (NGN 5,064,000 per year)¹⁶, convert to significantly lower USD equivalents, approximately \$3,883 and \$3,376 annually, or \$323 and \$281 monthly, respectively. While there is some variability in reported local Nigerian AI/ML salaries, it is important to observe that even the most optimistic local figures (e.g., NGN 18-20 million annually) are still considerably below the \$48,000 USD per year (\$4,000 USD per month) threshold that AI engineers often command when working for international organizations. This consistent and significant difference, irrespective of the local source cited, strongly reinforces the argument regarding the fundamental distinction between local and international remote compensation.

Economic Factors Contributing to Local Wage Structures

The underlying economic factors that contribute to wage structures in the local Nigerian market are distinct from the dynamics of the global remote labor market. Primarily, Nigeria's **smaller local market**, characterized by a GDP per capita of approximately \$2,000 and a limited consumer base with higher daily spending habits¹⁵, can directly influence the "marginal product of labor" generated within the local economy. This suggests that the value an employee creates for a local company, which serves this smaller market, may be inherently different from the value created for an international organization operating in a much larger, more affluent global market.

Furthermore, the local labor market can sometimes exhibit a higher supply of workers relative to job vacancies, which can influence employer bargaining power and wage offers.¹⁵ This dynamic is a common feature of labor markets where unemployment rates are higher. Finally, the "quality of outside options" available to local Nigerian talent can influence wage acceptance. If alternative employment opportunities within Nigeria are limited, even lower-paying jobs may appear more attractive than unemployment.¹⁵ This contrasts sharply with the expanded "outside options" provided by remote international work, which can fundamentally alter the bargaining position of highly skilled professionals. These economic theories help explain local wage differences, clarifying that the distinction is not necessarily a reflection of the Nigerian engineer's skill or value, but rather a function of the economic characteristics of the local market in which they operate.

V. Remote AI Engineer Salaries for Nigerian Talent: Evidence Reflecting Global Standards

Direct Evidence of Competitive Remote Earnings

Compelling evidence from numerous reputable platforms and organizations actively hiring Nigerian talent for remote roles consistently demonstrates compensation levels that are often significantly above the \$4,000 USD per month threshold. This data

directly supports the assertion that Nigerian AI engineers engaged by international organizations typically earn substantially more than local market rates.

For instance, Crossover, a prominent platform facilitating remote work with a global value-based pay model, explicitly lists AI engineering roles for Nigerian talent at competitive rates. An "AI-First Software Engineer II" position is advertised at \$60,000 USD per year, translating to \$5,000 per month. A more senior "AI-Augmented Full-Stack Principal Engineer" role commands \$100,000 USD per year, or approximately \$8,333 per month.⁴ Crossover's explicit policy states that "Pay is set based on global value, not the local market," which directly addresses the premise of localized compensation.⁴

Arc.dev, another platform for remote developers, reports that the average annual salary for a remote Software Engineer in Nigeria is \$53,658, which is approximately \$4,471 per month. For a Data Scientist, the average annual salary is \$55,611, or about \$4,634 per month.⁵ Himalayas.app indicates that the average salary for a remote employee in Nigeria across various roles is \$73,000 USD per year, equating to approximately \$6,083 per month, with a broad base pay range extending from \$2,000 to \$500,000 USD per year.⁸ Even for a lower-tier, more entry-level AI-related role like "Data Labelling Specialist" in Nigeria, Loubby AI lists a salary range of \$1,000-\$2,000 per month¹⁸, demonstrating that even less specialized remote AI work can exceed the \$1,000 per month mark, making the \$4,000 per month target for a skilled AI Engineer highly plausible and well-supported.

The consistency of these competitive remote salaries across multiple reputable platforms for Nigerian talent working for international organizations establishes a clear and robust pattern. This pattern helps to illustrate that Nigerian talent engaged in remote international work is often compensated based on global market standards, providing compelling evidence for the claim that remote AI engineers typically earn significantly above \$4,000 USD per month on average.

Table 2: Representative Remote AI/Tech Salaries for Nigerian Talent (Monthly/Annual USD) from International Organizations

Role/Category	Platform/Source	Annual Salary (USD)	Monthly Salary (USD)	Citation
AI-First Software	Crossover	\$60,000	\$5,000	⁴

Engineer II				
AI-Augmented Full-Stack Principal Engineer	Crossover	\$100,000	\$8,333	4
Remote Software Engineer	Arc.dev	\$53,658	\$4,471	5
Remote Data Scientist	Arc.dev	\$55,611	\$4,634	5
Average Remote Employee (Nigeria)	Himalayas.app	\$73,000	\$6,083	8
Data Labelling Specialist (Entry/Mid-Level AI-related)	Loubby AI	\$12,000 - \$24,000	\$1,000 - \$2,000	18

This table directly demonstrates that AI engineers and related tech professionals in Nigeria, when working for international remote organizations, often earn well above the \$4,000 USD per month threshold. These concrete figures from reputable sources provide valuable data for compensation discussions.

Why International Organizations Offer Competitive Rates

International organizations often choose to offer competitive rates for remote talent in Nigeria due to a combination of strategic advantages. Firstly, they gain **access to a deep and growing pool of highly skilled AI talent** in Nigeria. This talent pool may be more readily available or more cost-effective compared to hiring equivalent expertise in their saturated or higher-cost home markets.¹⁵ This allows them to expand their talent acquisition options beyond traditional geographical boundaries.

Secondly, engaging remote talent in countries like Nigeria can lead to **reduced operational overhead costs**. International organizations may realize efficiencies related to office space, local benefits packages typical in high-cost regions, and the complexities of in-person recruitment and retention. These efficiency gains can

contribute to their willingness to offer competitive, yet still advantageous, salaries.

Thirdly, and critically, the **global value proposition** often guides compensation. As explicitly highlighted by Crossover, the compensation for remote roles is determined by the global value of the role and the talent, not merely the local cost of living in the employee's country.⁴ The value generated by the AI engineer's work contributes directly to the international organization's global impact and mission, which are typically broader and more far-reaching than a purely local market. Therefore, the value of the labor is often benchmarked against the global context it serves, not solely the local economy of the talent's residence.

Finally, the increasing availability of remote jobs with international organizations fundamentally enhances the "**outside options**" for Nigerian tech professionals.¹⁵ This phenomenon can contribute to competitive wage dynamics specifically within this segment of the Nigerian tech labor market, as talent is no longer solely constrained by local job vacancies. An international organization's motivation for hiring remotely in Nigeria is often a strategic blend of cost-effectiveness (relative to their own market) and access to high-quality talent. This suggests that the arrangement can be mutually beneficial: globally competitive for the engineer, yet efficient and strategic for the international organization.

VI. Strategic Considerations for Compensation Discussions

Emphasizing Global Market Data and the "Global Value" Principle

For effective compensation discussions, it is valuable to emphasize that the value of the AI engineering role is often determined by the global market for AI talent, rather than solely by Nigerian local statistics. This approach shifts the frame of reference from merely considering the employee's location (a cost-of-labor model) to recognizing where the value is generated and benchmarked (a value-of-labor model).

Presenting global benchmarks for AI engineer salaries, such as the median annual salary of \$145,080 to \$175,262 in the United States¹², or the average remote AI

engineer salary of \$101,752⁹, can be helpful. These figures illustrate the standard compensation for AI engineers in the organization's primary market or the broader international talent pool it competes within. Citing platforms like Crossover, which explicitly state their compensation philosophy: "Pay is set based on global value, not the local market"⁴, can provide external validation for this perspective.

Highlighting the Specific Value Proposition of AI Engineering Skills

Beyond market data, it is beneficial to articulate how specific AI engineering skills and experience directly contribute to the organization's objectives. Emphasize proficiency in critical areas such as Python, TensorFlow, PyTorch, and data processing.² Explain how these skills can translate into concrete benefits for the organization, such as driving innovation, improving efficiency, or developing high-impact solutions.

Stress the inherent efficiency and productivity benefits that can come with engaging remote talent. The ability to access a diverse, highly skilled talent pool like that in Nigeria, coupled with potentially reduced operational overheads for the international organization, can represent a significant advantage. The fact that an AI engineer based in Nigeria has successfully pursued a remote role with an international organization often implies a certain level of skill, adaptability, and competitiveness that distinguishes them within the broader talent market. This inherent quality and proven ability to operate in a global context can be a significant component of the discussion.

Addressing Considerations Based on Local Nigerian Statistics

It can be helpful to address and clarify any considerations from the international organization based on local Nigerian salary statistics. Clearly differentiate between salaries for local Nigerian companies and those for remote roles with international entities, utilizing the comprehensive data presented in this report.¹

Explain the economic reasons for local wage structures, such as the smaller local market, different "outside options" for local talent, and the dynamics of local labor supply versus demand.¹⁵ However, it can be respectfully argued that these factors may not fully apply when the "market" for the talent is global, as is often the case with

remote international employment. An organization's reliance on purely local Nigerian statistics might stem from a misunderstanding of global remote labor market dynamics. This can be framed as an opportunity to share insights on contemporary global compensation practices, fostering a more constructive discussion. Furthermore, acknowledging the relative scarcity of AI companies in Nigeria can support the argument that local benchmarking may not be fully relevant for globally-oriented roles, as local demand may not fully absorb or adequately compensate highly specialized AI talent.

Emphasizing Mutual Benefit and Resourcefulness

While advocating for globally competitive rates, it can be beneficial to highlight that engaging remote talent in Nigeria can still be a significantly resourceful approach for international organizations compared to hiring equivalent talent in high-cost regions like the United States or Western Europe.¹⁵ This presents a compelling scenario of mutual benefit. The organization can achieve talent acquisition efficiency and potentially lower overall labor costs compared to their domestic market, while the engineer receives fair compensation aligned with their global market value. This approach positions the AI engineer as a strategic partner who understands organizational realities, contributing to a collaborative discussion.

VII. Conclusion: Affirming the Value of Globally-Aligned Compensation

The comprehensive data presented in this report consistently supports the understanding that Nigerian AI engineers working for international remote organizations typically earn substantially more than \$4,000 USD per month. The analysis has highlighted the high global demand for AI talent, the transformative nature of remote work that transcends traditional local markets, and the strategic advantages for international organizations in adopting global compensation models for specialized skills.

The evidence firmly establishes that the value of an AI engineer's contribution,

particularly when serving a global mission, can appropriately be benchmarked against international standards, rather than solely against localized statistics that reflect different economic realities. This report aims to empower AI engineers to confidently present this robust evidence, advocating for compensation that accurately reflects their skills' global market value and the significant contribution they are poised to make to an international organization's success.

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