

# Research Proposal: An Empirical Framework for AI Governance in Africa

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## Summary of the Proposal

The goal of AI governance is to ensure that machine learning technologies benefit all of humanity in a fair and equitable manner. Despite their recognition of its importance, many African countries remain inactive when it comes to developing relevant policies to regulate the development of AI within the region, particularly by foreign companies. The goal of this research is to help policymakers understand the factors to consider when developing AI governance policies for their nations' economic and social benefit.

## Background

Africa is a key player in the global AI supply chain, particularly in the early stages of production because of its young and diverse population. Although Egypt, Rwanda, and Mauritius have published comprehensive AI strategies, many other major African countries have no policies or AI strategies in sight. This inaction leaves foreign AI technologies to predominate in the region, offering technological products and solutions that may be incompatible with local development priorities.[2] Outsourcing AI development to foreign AI technologies to the point of dominance within the region endangers Africa's economic, political, and social development. As a result, policymakers must develop relevant AI governance to regulate how foreign companies operate in this space while also providing assistance to build local AI capacity.

To support local AI capacity while benefiting local economies and ecosystems [1], I believe policy responses to AI governance and development should build on national digital agendas with a focus on inclusive digital, data, and computing infrastructure, as well as skill development across all major African countries. In this research, I intend to investigate and propose the best frameworks that African policymakers can use to craft an effective AI governance policy for Africa's economic growth.

## Research Goal(s) & Question(s)

The purpose of this research is to provide a framework for African policymakers to develop the best AI governance and development strategies for addressing their unique challenges in AI development. I will attempt to answer questions about what key considerations African policymakers should keep in mind when developing AI governance and development policies.

The central question I intend to address is, 'How should African policymakers approach AI governance and development policy in the most relevant and pragmatic way possible?'

## Research Plan

There are six key activities I will undertake to achieve the aim of my research. I will:

- study existing frameworks for developing AI strategies in developed countries. I will study how some developed countries with similar economic and political nuances as some African countries approach policy-making for AI governance and development. What factors did they consider when developing their policies? What infrastructure did they invest in?

Table 1: Estimated Research Timeline

Activity	Completion Time (hours)	Month
Study AI Governance approach in developed countries	10 - 20	1
Speak with African policy-makers with AI strategies	20 - 40	1
Speak with local private AI companies and policy organizations	20 - 40	1
Engage government agencies to find out their approach to AI governance	20 - 40	2
Consolidate research and develop a framework	40 - 200	2
Present and test framework in an African country	40 - 200	3

- speak with policymakers in African countries with existing AI strategies (Egypt, Mauritius, Rwanda) to find out the factors they considered when developing their strategies, what has worked and what has not worked in their AI strategies.
- speak with privately-held AI stakeholders (local AI companies, independent think tanks and AI policy research organizations government officials, etc) to find out the most paramount challenges they face in building AI capacity.
- engage government agencies to understand how they approach AI governance.
- consolidate my findings to create a framework.
- present and test the framework in one African country without an AI governance and development strategy.

## Timeline

During three months I spend as a fellow with the Centre for the Governance of AI, I plan to complete at least five out of the six activities I have listed in my research plan. Some of these activities can be carried out concurrently, which will save time and give me the opportunity to complete at least 90% of the project. The projected research timeline is found in Table 1.

## References

- [1] Michael Nayebare. Artificial Intelligence Policy Issues in Africa. *Article*, 2019.
- [2] Adams R. AI In Africa: Key Concerns and Policy Considerations for the Future of the Continent. *Policy Brief APRI*, 8:01, 2022.