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SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

2026

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(a) Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming economies, governance, and societies worldwide, yet its trajectory remains deeply asymmetrical. While the Global North dominates the research, infrastructure, and rule-making that shape AI, much of the Global South, comprising more than 130 countries with diverse histories, economies, and cultures, faces systemic exclusion. This literature review seeks to examine how the Global South could be realistically integrated into a plural and just system of global AI governance and to explore the barriers, risks, and pathways toward that goal.

(b) Essentially, the Review asks: How could the Global South be meaningfully included in AI governance in ways that avoid a two-tier digital order, resist technological neo-colonialism, and ensure equity, sovereignty, and justice? This question is both urgent and political. If current trajectories remain unchanged, AI risks becoming a driver of dependency inequality, and cultural erasure. Conversely, with inclusive governance and South–South cooperation, AI could support sustainable development, human rights, and democratic resilience.

(c) The literature consistently highlights that AI is not neutral; it reflects global asymmetries in funding, data, and standard setting. To counter this, academics and practitioners advocate frameworks rooted in epistemic justice decoloniality, and data sovereignty. These emphasise recognition of diverse knowledge, redistribution of power, and agency over digital resources. Indigenous data sovereignty movements, feminist ethics of care, and African relational philosophies such as Ubuntu expand the ethical horizon beyond universalist Northern models. Crucially, the goal is not tokenistic inclusion of the South within existing fora, but rather a transformation: shifting from a world where the South is a passive recipient of technology to one where it is a co-creator of a digital future.

(d) Despite the collective term, the Global South is not monolithic; its AI trajectories reflect varied histories and resources.

Sub-Saharan Africa recognises AI for agriculture, healthcare, and inclusion, while warning against digital colonialism and dependency on foreign platforms. The African Union AI Strategy signals a collective push for sovereignty and development-centred governance.

Latin America and the Caribbean emphasise democracy, justice, and rights. Civil society groups advocate transparency, participatory governance, and regional solidarity, especially in light of histories of authoritarianism and inequality.

The ***Middle East*** complicates the Global South narrative: Gulf states invest heavily to position themselves as global leaders, while conflict-affected states remain largely absent from governance debates. This duality reveals the spectrum of AI realities across the region.

South and Southeast Asia illustrate both scale and uncertainty. Countries such as Indonesia pursue ambitious national strategies, yet informal labour markets and deep inequalities heighten risks of exclusion and algorithmic bias.

The ***Pacific Islands*** are under-represented yet bring unique perspectives tied to existential climate threats, cultural preservation, and survival. Francophone islands remain particularly marginalised in global AI conversations.

(e) These regional voices converge on key demands: sovereignty over data, culturally sensitive AI applications, and meaningful participation in global rule-making.

(f) There are six themes dominate the literature:

AI Governance and Ethics Current frameworks, designed in the North, often overlook local contexts. Governance must be participatory and regionally grounded.

Data Sovereignty Data extraction mirrors historic resource colonialism. Without ownership, Southern populations risk being reduced to raw data providers.

Labour Impacts AI threatens fragile employment systems while outsourcing Southern workers into precarious digital labour. "Ghost work" remains invisible yet essential to the AI economy.

Environmental Implications Mining, e-waste, and energy-intensive computation disproportionately burden the South, even as AI offers tools for climate resilience.

Development Priorities For the South, AI must serve urgent needs, healthcare, education, food security, and poverty reduction, rather than prestige projects.

Intersectionality and Marginalisation AI risks amplifying inequalities along lines of gender, caste, indigeneity, and disability unless governance frameworks embed intersectional analysis.

(g) Together, these themes illustrate that the concern of the Global South is not only about managing risks, but also about advancing justice, equity, and sovereignty.

(h) The literature shows growing momentum in Southern agency: African Union and Latin American initiatives, the UNESCO ethics framework, and grassroots digital movements mark important advances. Yet major gaps remain:

Empirical Research is thin, especially in rural, informal, and conflict-affected contexts.

Non-English Voices and Indigenous academics are under-represented.

Power Dynamics procurement contracts, donor agendas, and platform control remain opaque.

(i) Longitudinal studies of AI social impacts are scarce.

(j) The way forward requires coalition-building, capacity investment, and epistemic renewal. Regional alliances (AU, CARICOM, ASEAN), South–South cooperation, and local innovation platform and networks could counterbalance Northern dominance. Data sovereignty frameworks, community-led design, and participatory governance are essential for legitimacy. Importantly, AI governance must move from compliance checklists to justice-oriented approaches that reflect diverse values and priorities.

(k) This literature review underscores that the voice of the Global South is plural, layered, and indispensable. It is the voice of policymakers asserting sovereignty, researchers demanding recognition, civil society defending rights, entrepreneurs seeking opportunity, and communities insisting on dignity.

(l) If integrated meaningfully, these voices could enrich global AI governance shifting it from a project of dominance to one of co-creation. The future of AI cannot be just if it excludes the majority world. True global governance must be inclusive, participatory, and decolonial, anchored in the realities of the Global South and committed to a shared, human-centred digital future.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. How could the Global South be realistically integrated into a global AI governance system, delivering inclusivity, and avoiding a two-tier world, particularly via any potential "solutions" or pathways? It has become increasingly clear that one major issue regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the degree of engagement with the "Global South".

2. There is widespread acknowledgement (Birhane, A., 2021; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014; Fricker, M., 2007) within the AI ethics community that this is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. There is a need to develop a better understanding of the issues and potential solutions or pathways related to AI, the Global South and equity.

1.1 Scope and Objectives

3. This Review explores how the Global South could be meaningfully and realistically integrated into a global AI governance framework (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021), one that delivers true inclusivity and averts the formation of a two-tier world divided by technological privilege.

4. As AI reshapes societies, economies, and geopolitical dynamics, there is an urgent need to ensure that countries in the Global South are not merely passive recipients of externally-developed norms, but active contributors to the design and implementation of AI governance systems (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

5. The scope of this Review includes global policy dialogue, institutional power dynamics, multilateral and multistakeholder models, and the socio-economic realities of countries in Africa, Latin America the Caribbean, the Middle East, and parts of Asia.

6. Rather than presenting a universal vision, this Review aims to identify realistic pathways that are both structurally feasible and politically actionable, while remaining sensitive to the development needs, cultural contexts, and resource limitations of these regions.

7. Key objectives include:

    - Identification of the structural and systemic barriers, political, economic, technological, and infrastructural, that currently exclude much of the Global South from influencing and benefiting equitably from AI governance frameworks;

    - Identification of the long-term risks of exclusion, including digital dependency, ethical misalignment, and exacerbated global inequality, if current governance trajectories remain unchanged;

    - Examination of potential mechanisms, such as regional AI alliances, capacity-building partnerships, open-source governance tools, and reformed global institutions, which could create meaningful points of entry and influence; and

- Recommendation of a set of practical and politically-viable recommendations for how governments, international bodies, civil society, and the tech industry could collaboratively build a more pluralistic, inclusive, and just AI governance system.

8. Ultimately, this Review seeks to contribute to a forward,-looking, solution-oriented conversation about AI governance that resists technological neo-colonialism and, instead, supports a genuinely multi-polar and human-centred digital future.

1.2 Definitions

9. There is no universally-agreed definition of the term, *Global South*, which means there is no definitive list of countries[1]. The term "Global South" is not strictly geographical, Australia is geographically south though is not part of the Global South, while many Global South countries lie in the Northern Hemisphere (e.g., Mexico).

10. The term "Global South" is often used as a broad alternative to "developing countries" or "low-, and middle-income countries", though it is more nuanced and politically sensitive than that.

11. A country in the Global South typically shares certain economic, political, social, and historical characteristics such as:

- **Economic Characteristics**
  - Many classified as low, or middle income
  - High levels of poverty and income inequality
  - Reliance on agriculture or extractive industries (Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A., 2019; Pinto, L.F. & Jardim, M.A.C., 2020) based on primary resource exports e.g., minerals, oil, or crops
  - Limited industrialisation and technological infrastructure
  - Dependency on foreign aid or external debt (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; UNESCO, 2021)

- **Social Characteristics**
  - Rapid population growth and a young demographic profile
  - Lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality rates
  - Lower access to quality education and healthcare
  - Many people live in rural areas with limited services
  - Gender inequality and disparities in rights or opportunities

- **Political Characteristics**
  - Most were colonised, and gained independence mainly in the 20th century
  - Many have weak state institutions or are fragile democracies
  - Higher levels of corruption or political instability in certain regions
  - Limited global influence in political and economic institutions

[1] https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/what-is-the-global-south/

- **Historical and Geopolitical Characteristics**
  - Impact of colonial exploitation and borders drawn without regard to local cultures or ethnic groups
  - Struggles with post-colonial development and state building
  - Marginalisation in global governance structures (e.g., fewer seats in powerful international institutions such as the UN Security Council or G7).

- **Environmental and Development Characteristics**
  - Many are in tropical regions and are disproportionately affected by rising temperatures and sea levels
  - Environmental degradation due to rapid development without strong environmental regulation
  - Need for sustainable development in line with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

12. One way of identifying countries is to look at the membership of the G77, established in the 1960s to articulate and promote their collective interests at the United Nations (UN, 1964; UN ECA, 2022) from Central and South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Another indicator is the list of the 125 countries that attended the summit in India in January 2023.

13. From the above sources, a working list of countries has been developed (Appendix 7.1).

1.3 Methodology

14. Typically, a twin-track approach to researching the information has been adopted. Firstly, internet searches to identify academic journals, peer-reviewed materials, working papers, and books and book chapters, reviewing existing relevant research, policy papers, and reports. Secondly, a parallel activity would be using national experts to identify relevant national literature. This would be an early action within a Phase 2 (see below).

15. For now, the emphasis is on "black," "white," and "grey" literature referring to different categories based on their source and publication process. "Black" literature typically refers to peer-reviewed, commercially-published academic research found in databases.

16. The “grey literature” is used to describe a wide range of different information that is produced outside of traditional publishing and distribution channels, and which is often not well represented in indexing databases. It encompasses materials such as reports, working papers, and conference proceedings. "White" literature is often used interchangeably with "black" literature in this context and sometimes refers to official government publications or reports.

17. In general, various information sources would include: Library catalogues (theses, dissertations, official publications, research reports; Online repositories (theses, dissertations, research reports, preprints; Organisational websites (annual reports, market reports, speeches, working papers, discussion papers, policy statements, government reports, newsletters, statistics) and Internet search engines (could be particularly useful for

sources such as blogs, twitter, wikis, presentations, email lists etc) that may not be found via other routes.

18. It is possible to use a number of different keywords in a single internet search, by using operators. The three most commonly used operators are AND, OR, NOT. These are known as Boolean operators and could be used to broaden or narrow a search and to exclude unwanted concepts. Truncation is a technique that broadens a search to include various word endings and spellings. For instance, to use truncation, enter the root of a word and put the truncation symbol * at the end. The symbols "!" "*" or "#" may also be used.

19. The database will return results that include any ending of that root word. Wildcards are similar to truncation though are used to substitute for a single letter or no letter in a word. They are useful for irregular plurals and for British/US English spellings and broaden a search by including variant word spellings. The question mark symbol is most commonly used. The symbols "!" "*" or "#" may also be used. Phrase searching is the most limiting technique as it is used to specify that terms must appear next to each other, and in the order specified. Phrase searching is commonly achieved by surrounding the phrase with quotation marks.

20. Various documents obtained throughout this review are listed in Appendix 7.2.

21. Various assumptions have been made, and these include:

    - A central assumption in much AI-Global South literature is that AI is invented in the Global North and transferred to the Global South. This frames the Global South as a passive recipient of innovation rather than an active co-creator. Such framing reinforces a colonial logic of technological dependency (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; UNESCO, 2021), where development is measured by the extent of adoption, not by local innovation or agency;

    - AI is frequently portrayed as a transformative force capable of solving entrenched problems, poverty, healthcare, agriculture, governance—primarily through enhanced efficiency or service delivery. This technical perspective tends to assume AI neutrality while overlooking structural inequalities and local power dynamics (Mathur, V. & Chamuah, A., 2025). Critics argue that this narrative often neglects local political economies, cultural norms, and sustainable models of development;

    - Literature often presumes that ethical frameworks (Fricker, M., 2007; Gilligan, C., 1982; Tronto, J.C., 1993), privacy norms, and governance principles developed in the Global North are universally applicable. Yet academics highlight the lack of sensitivity to local contexts, histories, and epistemologies in applying these frameworks across the Global South. This assumption supports the notion of ethnocentric universality, ignoring that values and risks differ across cultural and political settings;

    - A recurrent assumption is that the Global South is data poor, and thus a source of raw data for training models. This perspective reduces local populations to

resource providers, without acknowledging data sovereignty or intellectual contribution (BRICS, 2022; ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

- It mirrors historic extractive dynamics (Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A., 2019; Pinto, L.F. & Jardim, M.A.C., 2020), replicating digital colonialism (Amnesty International, 2021; Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A., 2019; Taylor, L. & Broeders, D., 2022) where local communities bear the costs of resource extraction and environmental degradation.

- The literature routinely assumes that building technical capacity, through infrastructure development, technical education, and institutional design, is the primary pathway to AI equity. While necessary, this narrative often sidesteps deeper questions of who controls AI systems, who participates in design, and whose epistemologies are privileged;

- Some works express optimism about AI enabling leapfrogging (e.g. bypassing legacy infrastructure via mobile and digital tech), citing cases such as inclusive interfaces in Ghana, crop-disease detection in Kenya, tele-medicine in Zambia. Yet others argue these narratives often begin at a significantly marginalised base, African contributions to core AI research remain under 0.5%, rendering leapfrogging stories overly simplistic (Björkegren, D., 2025).

- A further assumption is that the Global South lacks meaningful agency in AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021), positioned as mere adherents to norms set by the Global North. However, emerging academic material rejects this view, arguing that many countries in the Global South could develop meaningful AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021) capacity through systematic policy frameworks, national AI strategies (African Union, 2023; UN ECA, 2022; (UNECA, 2023), and multi-stakeholder coordination. This approach reframes them not as passive but as actors shaping their own technological futures; and

- Some academics argue for a decolonial (de Santos, B., 2014) AI paradigm, drawing on post-colonial theory to critique the power imbalances in AI development and calling for epistemic renewal, affective reconnection, and localised technical practice. This breaks with the assumption of global uniformity by centring local voices, reverse pedagogies, and pluralistic ethical frameworks (Fricker, M., 2007; Gilligan, C., 1982; Tronto, J.C., 1993).

22. Currently, some key search questions could be:

- *What are the current and potential impacts of AI on economies, labour markets, governance, and communities in the Global South?;*
- *How are data, privacy, and sovereignty understood and negotiated in these contexts?;*
- *What ethical concerns and opportunities are most urgent for local stakeholders?;*
- *Where are the knowledge gaps or areas of under-representation in global AI conversations?; and*
- What priorities should shape future AI governance frameworks to better reflect Global South realities?

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

23. Based partially on the above, risks could be anticipated.

24. The promise of AI in the Global South is often accompanied by a host of risks that reflect not only technological challenges but also deep-seated political, social, and economic vulnerabilities. These risks are frequently systemic in nature, rooted in global inequities, and their mitigations must go beyond narrow technical fixes.

25. Below is an overview of the key risks and corresponding mitigation pathways emerging from contemporary literature. Such risks are presented together with potential mitigations:

    - AI systems developed in the Global North extract data from populations in the Global South without fair compensation, representation, or control. Often under the guise of innovation or development aid, foreign corporations and governments gain access to vast datasets from marginalised communities, fuelling AI systems that ultimately benefit wealthier actors;

      Mitigation:
      Data sovereignty frameworks could allow countries and communities in the Global South to control how their data are collected, stored, and used (BRICS, 2022; ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

      This includes legislation on cross-border data flows, locally-governed data trusts, and indigenous data governance models that respect collective rights over information. Empowering local institutions to steward and analyse data is also key.

    - AI systems trained on datasets from the Global North often fail to represent the linguistic, cultural, and social realities of the Global South. This leads to biased outputs, from mis-identification in facial recognition systems to poor performance in language processing tools for under-resourced languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021;

      Mitigation:
      Inclusive AI design could prioritise the development of locally-relevant datasets and involves communities in the design process. Funding open-access corporations in African, Indigenous, and regional languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021), as well as encouraging multi-lingual research, are also essential. AI audits and impact assessments tailored to local populations help uncover bias (Amnesty International, 2021; Hao, K., 2021; West, S.M. *et al*., 2019) early in deployment.

    - AI encroachment on jobs, especially through automation in agriculture, manufacturing, and services, poses major threats in economies where labour markets are largely informal and safety nets are weak. There is a concern that AI could widen inequality, especially if productivity gains are not redistributed equitably;

Mitigation:
Just transition frameworks could link automation with reskilling, digital literacy programmes, and social protection policies. Context-specific education strategies, aligned with local job markets could help workers adapt. In addition, supporting AI applications that augment rather than replace human labour (e.g., smart agriculture or micro-entrepreneur tools) could create inclusive value chains (Ogunbukola, M. 2024).

- AI technologies, particularly in surveillance (Amnesty International, 2021; Hao, 2021; West, S.M. *et al*., 2019), predictive policing, and digital identification, are increasingly deployed in ways that infringe on civil liberties. In politically fragile states or authoritarian regimes, AI could entrench state control, marginalise dissent, and disproportionately target vulnerable groups;

  Mitigation:
  Robust AI governance mechanisms, including legal safeguards on surveillance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021) human rights impact assessments, and independent oversight bodies are needed. A human rights-based approach to AI is gaining traction, with civil society playing a vital role in monitoring misuse and holding governments accountable.

- AI systems often require high computational power, extensive electricity, and stable internet infrastructure, resources that are unequally distributed globally. Deploying large-scale AI in contexts of infrastructural precarity could exacerbate existing divides or displace public spending priorities (Li, S. & Guo, C. 2025;

  Mitigation:
  Appropriate scale technologies, AI that are resource-efficient and optimised for low-connectivity environments are needed. Decentralised AI solutions (e.g., edge computing, lightweight models) could better serve regions with intermittent access to infrastructure. Environmental impact assessments tailored to the Global South context are also increasingly recommended.

- A risk less frequently acknowledged, though equally critical, is the potential for technological dependency on foreign AI solutions, platforms, and talent. Over-reliance on imported tools could weaken local innovation ecosystems and create lock-in effects that limit future adaptability (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; UNESCO, 2021; and

  Mitigation:
  Local capacity building and ecosystem development is needed. This means investing not only in technical skills but also in research institutions, open innovation hubs, and South-South collaboration networks. Strategic public procurement and funding for local AI start-ups could create an enabling environment where homegrown solutions flourish.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

- Many countries in the Global South lack comprehensive ethical guidelines or enforcement mechanisms for AI. As a result, harmful technologies may be introduced without adequate safeguards or accountability structures.

  Mitigation:
  Establishing context-sensitive ethical frameworks (Fricker, M., 2007; Gilligan, C., 1982; Tronto, J.C., 1993), informed by local values and led by inclusive stakeholder coalitions, is essential. Regional collaboration (e.g., the African Union AI Strategy (African Union, 2023; UNECA, 2023) and knowledge exchange could help standardise protection. Moreover, participatory policy-making processes ensure that ethical debates are not imposed but emerge from lived experiences of local communities.

26. The risks associated with AI in the Global South are not simply the by-products of poor governance or lack of infrastructure, they are entangled with global asymmetries of power, knowledge, and capital. Consequently, mitigation must go beyond narrow regulatory or technical fixes to include broader social transformation.

27. Academics advocate for a shift in AI discourse: from risk management to justice, from adoption to agency, and from compliance to co-creation. It is essential to consider the above during a literature review search in order to lessen inherent bias in the findings (Amnesty International, 2021; (Hao, K., 2021; West, S.M. *et al*., 2019). This applies to the mechanics of search which could limit access to potential stakeholders; language barriers, political sensitivities and any representational gaps.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Key Concepts

28. The global conversation on AI is often dominated by the priorities, values, and institutions of the Global North. Corporate laboratories, elite universities, and multilateral bodies based in Europe and North America set the terms of the debate on AI ethics (Birhane, A., 2021; Fricker, M., 2007; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014), governance, and regulation. Meanwhile, voices from the Global South are frequently marginalised, appearing in global fora only as recipients of "capacity building" or as case studies of AI risks and harms. This imbalance risks reproducing colonial logic of knowledge production and technological dependency (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; UNESCO, 2021).

29. To redress this imbalance, a theoretical framework is needed to conceptualise how voices from the Global South could be meaningfully heard in AI discourse and decision making. Such a framework should not merely aim for inclusion within existing structures but must address deeper questions of power, epistemology, and justice (Wählisch, M. & Kufus, F., 2025)

30. Below, seven interlinked concepts provide the basis for such a framework.

Epistemic Justice and Knowledge Plurality

31. The Fricker concept of epistemic injustice (Fricker, M., 2007), whereby individuals or groups are unfairly discredited, is highly relevant for AI. In the global technology debate, the Global South often faces testimonial injustice, where its contributions are undervalued, and hermeneutical injustice, where its lived experiences are not captured by the dominant conceptual frameworks.

32. de Sousa Santos *et al* (2014) argue for an ecology of knowledges *[sic*, where diverse epistemologies coexist without being subordinated to Western science. Applied to AI, this means recognising that indigenous philosophies, community-based innovation, and non-West ethical traditions are not peripheral but, rather, they are essential sources of insight. For example, African relational ontologies (highlighted in Birhane, A. (2021) on relational ethics) provide alternative visions of human–machine relations that challenge individualistic, utilitarian models of AI ethics (Birhane, A., 2021; Fricker, M., 2007; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014).

De-coloniality and Power Rebalancing

33. AI is not neutral, it reflects global asymmetries in research funding, infrastructure, and corporate power. Mignolo, M. (2011) concept of *coloniality of power* is instructive: even after formal decolonisation, colonial logic persists in economic and technological systems. For the Global South, hearing its voice in AI means moving beyond tokenistic participation to redistribution of power.

34. This involves questioning whose interests are served by global AI standards, whose languages are embedded in large models, and who controls computational resources.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

35. A decolonial AI framework demands shifting Global South actors from passive recipients to co-authors of an AI global trajectory (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014).

Data Sovereignty

36. Data extraction from the Global South has been likened to digital colonialism (Amnesty International, 2021; Couldry, N. & Mejias, U.A., 2019; Taylor, L. & Broeders, D., 2022). They describe this as "data colonialism," where human life is appropriated through data flows in ways that mirror historical extractivism.

37. The concept of data sovereignty (BRICS, 2022; ITU, 2022; (UNESCO, 2021), the right of individuals and communities to govern their data, offers a corrective. It emphasises local agency in deciding how data are collected, stored, and used. Beyond state-level claims, indigenous opinions stress indigenous data sovereignty, linking data governance to cultural identity, collective rights, and ecological stewardship. Embedding these principles in AI development ensures that communities are not simply data sources but custodians of digital futures.

Participatory and Inclusive Governance

38. Global AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021) often operates through elite fora such as the OECD AI Principles, or the G7 Hiroshima Process, where Global South participation is limited. Even within UN processes, participation risks being consultative rather than co-decisional.

39. A Global South–oriented framework requires deliberative governance: fora where diverse stakeholders, states, civil society, grassroots organisations, and innovators, could genuinely shape agendas. Arnstein, S.R. (1969) "ladder of participation" remains instructive: moving from tokenism to real citizen power. For AI, this means shared rule-setting, not mere consultation.

Equity in Capacity and Infrastructure

40. The ability to speak and be heard in AI debates depends on structural resources. The Global South often faces barriers: lack of computational infrastructure, limited access to training data in local languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021), and under-funded research environments.

41. Sen, A. (1999) capabilities approach provides a useful framing: equity is not only about re-distributing material resources but enabling the substantive freedom to shape the technological future. Investment in linguistic diversity (Joshi, P. *et al.,* 2020; Munyua, A., 2021) in AI models, support for regional research hubs, and equitable technology transfer are all pre-conditions for hearing Global South voices.

Ethics of Care and Relationality

42. Western AI ethics (Birhane, A., 2021; Fricker, M. 2007; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014) frameworks tend to emphasise abstract principles such as fairness, accountability, and transparency. While valuable, these frameworks risk overlooking relational and community-based ethics.

43. Drawing on feminist ethics of care (Gilligan, C., 1982; Tronto, J., 1993) and Global South traditions of relationality (e.g., Ubuntu (Fricker, M., 2007; Ramose, M.B., 2002) in Africa), an alternative ethical lens emphasises interdependence, reciprocity, and ecological balance. Birhane, A. (2021) critique of "universalist ethics" in AI highlights the need to root ethics in relational contexts. Such perspectives expand AI ethics from narrow compliance checklists to holistic frameworks attentive to community wellbeing and ecological sustainability.

South–South Solidarity and Coalition-Building

44. Finally, amplifying Global South voices requires building collective power. Individual countries often face asymmetries when negotiating with Big Tech or multilateral institutions. However, coalitions such as the African Union AI strategies, the Latin American Open Data Charter, or BRICS digital cooperation initiatives demonstrate the potential of South–South solidarity (BRICS, 2022; UN, 1964).

45. Coalition-building enhances bargaining power, enables resource sharing, and produces shared narratives that disrupt Northern dominance. The Bandung (UN, 1964) spirit of post-colonial solidarity finds new relevance in the digital age, where coordinated action could s*et a*lternative norms for AI development.

From Inclusion to Transformation

46. Hearing Global South voices in AI requires more than inclusion within existing fora; it demands a transformation of the epistemic, political, and ethical foundations of AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021). A framework built on epistemic justice (Birhane, A., 2021; Fricker, M., 2007; (de Sousa Santos, B., 2014), decoloniality (de Sousa Santos, B., 2014), data sovereignty (BRICS, 2022; ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021), participatory governance, capacity equity, relational ethics, and South–South (BRICS, 2022; UN, 1964) solidarity provides a pathway to such transformation. This vision of the Global South is not a periphery but a co-creator of the AI global trajectory. Its diverse voices are essential not only for justice but for ensuring that artificial intelligence reflects the plurality of human knowledge and the shared challenges of a planetary future.

2.2 Relevant Models or Theories

47. The seven concepts, above, could be mapped onto some relevant theoretical traditions and models:

- Epistemic Justice (Birhane, A., 2021; Fricker, M., 2007; (de Sousa Santos, B., 2014) and Knowledge Plurality;
- Testimonial and Hermeneutical Injustice (Fricker, M., (2007);
- "Epistemologies of the South (de Sousa Santos, B., (2014) and "ecologies of knowledge" (Birhane, A., 2021), directly supports plurality and coexistence of knowledge; and
- "Situated Knowledges" recognition of contextual, embodied knowledge (Haraway, D., (1988).

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

De-coloniality and Power Rebalancing

- Coloniality of power (Mignolo, W. D., 2011) and coloniality of knowledge (Quijano, A. (1997; and
- Decolonial AI (Birhane, A. (2021) explicit calls for rebalancing AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021) through decolonial thought (de Sousa Santos, B., 2014).

Data Sovereignty

- Data colonialism (Amnesty International, 2021; Couldry, N. & Mejias, U.A., 2019; Taylor, L. & Broeders, D., 2022) - conceptualises data extraction as a new form of empire;
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty frameworks (BRICS, 2022; ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021;
- CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (Carroll, S.R. *et al* (2020; and
- Digital sovereignty discourses, especially in Latin America (BRICS, 2022; ITU, 2022; (UNESCO, 2021), Africa, and Asia (state, and community-led).

Participatory and Inclusive Governance

- "Ladder of Participation" (Arnstein, S. R.,1969) from tokenism to citizen power;
- Deliberative democracy theories (Dryzek, J.S., 2005) inclusion in rule-setting; and
- Science and Technology Studies frameworks of "co-production" (Jasanoff, S. 2004), science/technology and society mutually shape each other.

Equity in Capacity and Infrastructure

- Capability Approach (Sen, A., 1999), focuses on substantive freedoms, not just material inputs;
- Dependency (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; (UNESCO, 2021) theory (Ricci, A., 2025) highlights structural inequities between North and South; and
- UNESCO (UNESCO, 2021) "Open Science" and "AI for Sustainable Development" frameworks attempt to build equity in infrastructure and knowledge access.

Ethics of Care and Relationality

- Feminist ethics of care (Gilligan, A., 1982; Tronto, J.C., 1993);
- Ubuntu (Fricker, M., 2007; Ramose, M.B., 2002) philosophy, African relational ontology stressing community and interdependence;
- Relational ethics, critiques universalist/individualist AI ethics (Birhane, A., 2021; Fricker, M., 2007; (de Sousa Santos, B., 2014) frameworks; and
- Environmental justice theories linking human–AI ethics (Birhane, A., 2021; Fricker, M., 2007; (de Sousa Santos, B., 2014) with ecological responsibility.

South–South Solidarity and Coalition-Building

- Bandung (UN, 1964) Conference (1955) and Non-Aligned Movement, political precedent for postcolonial solidarity;
- Dependency (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; (UNESCO, 2021)/world-systems theory encourages collective resistance to Northern dominance;
- Contemporary South–South (BRICS, 2022; UN, 1964) digital cooperation models (African Union AI strategy (African Union, 2023; UNECA, 2023), BRICS cooperation, Latin America (BRICS, 2022; ITU, 2022; (UNESCO, 2021)n open data initiatives; and
- "subaltern cosmopolitanism" cross-border solidarity among Global South actors (de Sousa Santos, B., 2014).

48. So, it is clear that there is not yet a single integrated model that covers all seven concepts together, though there is a rich constellation of overlapping theories; decolonial studies (de Sousa Santos, B., 2014), epistemic justice (Birhane, A., 2021; Fricker, M., 2007; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014), Science and Technology Studies, indigenous data frameworks, feminist ethics, and South–South political economy) that could be integrated (BRICS, 2022; UN, 1964).

2.3 Regional Focus

49. From Appendix 7.1 there are several key points to be drawn:

- The Caribbean Region is mostly drawn from English-speaking islands;
- Several states in the Middle East are not typical of a "Global South" state in terms of economic, social, political, historical, geopolitical and development characteristics; and
- The Pacific Region is generally poorly represented and specifically from Francophone islands.

The Caribbean Region

50. In the Caribbean, conversations about AI are still in their early stages, yet the stakes are already clear. For the English-speaking islands, small states with vibrant cultures though limited resources, AI holds the potential to re-shape development pathways in ways that are both promising and uncertain.

51. Across the region, AI is framed less as a frontier of technological competition and more as a tool for development and resilience. The Caribbean faces intersecting challenges: climate change and hurricane vulnerability, dependence on tourism, high energy costs, food insecurity, and the persistent burden of debt. For governments and communities, the central question is: *How could AI serve our priorities rather than overwhelm them?* AI could enhance disaster preparedness by improving storm prediction, modernise agriculture with precision tools, strengthen healthcare through telemedicine and diagnostics, and support education through adaptive learning platforms.

52. Yet the Caribbean voice in global AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021) remains faint. Like the Pacific, the region is often grouped with broader "developing country" blocs, its specific concerns overshadowed by larger nations. English-speaking islands in particular, such as Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, The Bahamas, and smaller Eastern Caribbean states, are rarely represented in the decision-making fora where global AI norms are being shaped. This under-representation risks leaving them as policy takers rather than policy shapers, adopting imported frameworks that may not reflect their realities.

53. The structural constraints are significant. Most Caribbean nations face small markets, limited technical expertise, and scarce investment in digital infrastructure. Many rely heavily on imported technologies and expertise, which raises questions of sovereignty, affordability, and adaptation to local contexts. A health AI, trained in North America, may not address Caribbean epidemiological patterns; an automated education platform may not reflect Caribbean history, identity, or cultural expression.

54. Without deliberate strategies, AI could deepen dependency (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; (UNESCO, 2021) on external actors rather than building local capacity.

55. Still, the Caribbean has a unique ethical and cultural perspective to bring to global AI debates. Rooted in histories of colonialism, slavery, and resistance, the region is acutely sensitive to questions of power, justice, and ownership. This history shapes an awareness that technological systems are never neutral, and that governance must guard against new forms of digital colonialism (Amnesty International, 2021; Couldry, N. & Mejias, U.A., 2019; (Taylor, L. & Broeders, D., 2022).

56. At the same time, the Caribbean long tradition of regional cooperation, through CARICOM and other institutions, offers a platform for collective bargaining and shared capacity-building in AI adoption and regulation.

57. For English-speaking Caribbean islands, finding a voice in AI is not just about joining global conversations; it is about asserting that their development priorities, cultural heritage, and lived experiences matter in shaping the future of technology. Without that voice, AI risks being another chapter in external dependency (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; (UNESCO, 2021). With it, the Caribbean could help re-imagine AI as a tool for resilience, inclusion, and self-determination, a technology that reflects not only global priorities but also the rhythms, histories, and aspirations of island societies.

The Middle East Region

58. When speaking of AI and digital governance through the lens of the "Global South," the Middle East complicates the picture. The region cannot be read as a monolith, nor does it fully align with the developmental, economic, or geopolitical characteristics typically associated with the Global South. Instead, it presents a dual narrative: one of resource-rich states investing heavily in AI to position themselves as global players, and another of conflict-affected or economically-fragile states where AI governance is distant from urgent survival needs (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

59. In the Gulf monarchies, such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, AI is framed not as a tool to "catch up" with the North, but as a strategic lever of global leadership. National AI strategies are ambitious (African Union, 2023; UN ECA, 2022; (UNECA, 2023), often tied to broader visions of economic diversification away from hydrocarbons. Dedicated ministries, national AI councils, and smart city initiatives (such as NEOM in Saudi Arabia or Smart Dubai) highlight not only investment capacity but also political will to shape international digital standards. These states invite global AI researchers, host major conferences, and position themselves as conveners of dialogue. Their governance approach is top-down, state-driven, and explicitly tied to geopolitical influence, more akin to emerging middle powers than marginalised Global South actors.

60. At the other end of the spectrum, states such as Lebanon, Syria or Yemen, struggle with political instability, economic collapse, and humanitarian crises. Here, AI and digital governance frameworks are either absent or under-developed. Digital infrastructure is weak, regulatory capacity limited, and immediate needs, shelter, healthcare, basic services, take precedence over abstract conversations about algorithms and automation.

61. In these contexts, AI is more likely to arrive through humanitarian agencies or external donors than through national strategies, reinforcing dependency on international actors (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; UNESCO, 2021).

62. Between these poles, countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Morocco illustrate a hybrid reality. They see AI as an enabler for education, entrepreneurship, and development though lack the same resources as the Gulf to dominate the field. Their digital governance frameworks tend to balance aspirations for innovation with concerns about regulation, workforce adaptation, and international partnerships. These states reflect the more "typical" Global South struggles, capacity-building, digital divides[2], and dependence on foreign platforms, yet they also play bridging roles in regional AI discourse.

63. What makes the Middle East particularly complex in AI governance is its historical and geopolitical positioning (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021). Some states are actively shaping global digital norms, leveraging wealth and diplomacy to gain influence, while others are almost absent from the conversation. The region is thus both a leader and a laggard in AI governance: advancing global initiatives on one hand, while facing profound vulnerabilities on the other.

64. Ethically, this divergence raises questions: whose priorities shape "the Middle East" AI future? The high-tech narratives of Gulf states, focused on innovation, smart governance, and global competitiveness, often overshadow the needs of poorer states, where AI could play a critical role in health, agriculture, or disaster management though where governance frameworks are lacking. This imbalance mirrors global inequalities: the Middle East contains both states that aspire to set AI agendas and those that remain policy takers, reliant on technologies and rules made elsewhere.

65. Consequently, the Middle East sits both inside and outside the Global South when it comes to AI and digital governance. Its wealthiest states resist being positioned as passive recipients of technology; they seek to shape the rules. Yet across much of the region, the realities of inequality, digital dependency (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; UNESCO, 2021), and vulnerability to global tech monopolies resonate strongly with Global South concerns.

66. Ultimately, the Middle East illustrates that the "Global South" is not a uniform category in AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021). It is a spectrum of experiences, from AI super-investors building global influence on fragile states struggling with basic digital inclusion. Recognising this complexity is essential: it prevents over-simplification and ensures that debates about AI governance reflect the diversity of realities across the region.

The Pacific Region

67. In the fast-moving global conversation on AI, some regions speak loudly, while others are scarcely heard. The Pacific, home to diverse island nations scattered across a vast ocean, is one of the least represented voices in global AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021), ethics, and innovation discourse.

[2] "*digital divide*" may also occur within the Global North, particular within less advantaged economic groups

Within this already under-represented region, the Francophone islands are especially absent, their perspectives often overlooked in an international dialogue dominated by Anglophone narratives, Northern priorities, and large economies.

68. This silence is not for lack of a stake. Pacific Island nations face existential challenges, climate change, rising sea levels, cyclones, and resource vulnerabilities, which make the ethical use of AI particularly urgent. AI could support climate modelling, disaster preparedness, sustainable fisheries, and healthcare delivery across remote islands. Yet, in global frameworks that shape how AI is built and governed, Pacific priorities are rarely at the table.

69. The Francophone islands, such as New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna, are additionally marginalised. First, they are overshadowed within global AI debates that already privilege larger states in the Pacific, such as Australia and New Zealand. Second, their Francophone identity often places them outside the Anglophone-dominated Pacific networks that engage with AI capacity-building, policy, and governance. This leaves them in a peculiar in-between space: connected to French and European digital policy discourses, yet distant from the lived realities of Pacific-wide regional cooperation on technology.

70. The result is a lack of representation, visibility, and agency. When the OECD, or the UN convene conversations on AI, Pacific Francophone islands rarely feature as active participants or agenda-setters. Their concerns, about linguistic diversity (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., (2021), small-scale economies, cultural preservation, or the sustainability of digital infrastructure, are seldom reflected in global principles. Instead, the region risks being treated as a passive recipient of AI technologies designed elsewhere, with little say in how these tools align with local priorities and cultural values.

71. From an ethical standpoint, this absence matters. Without the Pacific, and especially Francophone Pacific, voices global AI governance misses perspectives grounded in communal world views, indigenous knowledge systems, and climate justice struggles. These are not peripheral issues; they are central to building a just and sustainable AI future. The Pacific experience of vulnerability and resilience offers insights that could enrich global debates yet only if space is created for these voices to be heard.

72. Consequently, the Pacific region under-representation, and the near invisibility of Francophone islands, reflects broader inequalities in how AI narratives are shaped. To redress this imbalance, AI governance must go beyond the dominant centres of power and actively seek to include those at the margins. In the Pacific, the future of AI is not just about innovation; it is about survival, sovereignty, and the preservation of cultures across a rising ocean.

2.4 Thematic Focus

73. The Thematic Focus is on:

- AI governance and ethics;
- Data sovereignty and ownership;
- Labour impacts and automation;
- Environmental implications;
- AI and development priorities; and
- Intersectionality and marginalised experiences.

AI Governance and Ethics

74. The rise of AI is often told as a story of innovation led by technology giants in the Global North. But the Global South, stretching across Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and parts of the Middle East, is increasingly becoming both a testing ground for AI applications and a space where governance and ethics carry unique dimensions.

75. For countries in the Global South, AI governance cannot simply be a matter of "adopting" Northern frameworks or importing regulations designed for wealthier economies. The contexts are different: many societies contend with fragile democracies, limited data protection regimes, uneven digital infrastructure, and socio-economic inequalities that amplify the stakes of automation.

76. Governance here must grapple with the reality that AI could entrench dependency (UN ECA, 2022; UNECA, 2023; UNESCO, 2021) on foreign technology providers, exacerbate surveillance (Hao, K., 2021; West, S.M. *et al*., 2019) and exclusion, or worsen digital divides, yet it could also unlock transformative gains in healthcare, agriculture, education, and climate resilience (Couldry, N. & Mejias, U.A., 2019; Pinto, L.F. & Jardim, J.M.C., 2020; Taylor, L. & Broeders, D., 2022).

77. From an ethical standpoint, issues of justice, sovereignty, and inclusivity have greater significance than in Northern debates. For example:

- Data Colonialism (Amnesty International, 2021; Couldry, N. & Mejias, U.A., 2019; Taylor, L. & Broeders, D., 2022) is a recurring concern: vast datasets extracted from populations in the Global South often flow to servers in the Global North, with little benefit returning to the communities from where the data originate;
- Algorithmic Bias (Hao, K., 2021; West, S.M. *et al*., 2019) has particular resonance where marginalised groups, whether by caste, ethnicity, gender, or rural location, already face systemic exclusion. Poorly designed AI could magnify these inequities; and
- Labour Ethics arise in the context of outsourced digital work (Gray, M. & Suri, S., (2019): content moderation, data labelling, and annotation tasks often fall on low-paid workers in the Global South, raising questions about fair wages, working conditions, and the invisibility of their contributions.

78. Governance frameworks in the Global South therefore stress contextual adaptation rather than wholesale adoption of "universal" ethical principles.

While global guidelines such as the AI Ethics Recommendations provide a baseline from where local actors argue for embedding indigenous knowledge, community values, and development priorities into AI strategies (Birhane, A., 2021). This means:

- Prioritising capacity-building so that policymakers, civil society, and local innovators could critically engage with AI technologies;
- Ensuring participatory governance, where communities are consulted in the design and deployment of AI, especially in sensitive domains such as healthcare or welfare; and
- Building regional alliances, for instance, the African Union AI Strategy (African Union, 2023; UNECA, 2023) or Latin American coalitions, to strengthen bargaining power against global tech monopolies and promote South–South cooperation (BRICS, 2022; UN, 1964).

79. Central to AI governance in the Global South is about resisting a future where technologies are passively imported and uncritically applied. Instead, it is about shaping AI to serve collective goals: sustainable development, social inclusion, and cultural integrity. Ethics here is not only about harm reduction, but also about asking deeper questions of whose values, whose voices and whose benefits does AI ultimately advance.

Data Sovereignty and Ownership

80. In the digital age, data has become the new currency of power. Yet, for much of the Global South, data flows resemble older patterns of resource extraction: wealth generated from local people and environments is captured elsewhere, while the originating communities receive little of the value in return. This dynamic has given rise to urgent calls for data sovereignty, the right of nations and communities to govern how data about them are collected, stored, and used (BRICS, 2022; ITU, 2022; (UNESCO, 2021).

81. For many countries in Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and the Pacific, the stakes are high. Multinational corporations harvest vast quantities of personal, environmental, and behavioural data, from social media activity to satellite images of farmland, often storing and processing it in data centres located in the Global North. The resulting insights, products, and profits rarely flow back to local economies. This imbalance is often described as digital or data colonialism (Amnesty International, 2021; Couldry, N. & Mejias, U.A., 2019; (Taylor, L. & Broeders, D., 2022), where knowledge extracted from the Global South fuels innovation elsewhere, deepening dependency rather than fostering autonomy.

82. Ownership becomes not just a technical matter, but a political and ethical one. Communities ask: Who owns our health records? Who decides how our languages are digitised (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021)? Who profits from the digitisation of our cultural heritage or indigenous knowledge? Too often, the answer lies outside national borders, in the hands of corporations and governments far removed from the people whose lives generate the data.

83. From a governance perspective, data sovereignty in the Global South is tied to self-determination. Countries seek to establish policies that ensure the data of their citizens is stored locally, subject to domestic laws and oversight, rather than foreign jurisdictions.

84. This push is visible in emerging data localisation laws, as well as in efforts to create regional data-sharing frameworks that respect local values and development priorities. Yet, the challenge remains: many states lack the infrastructure, technical capacity, and bargaining power to enforce these ambitions against dominant global tech players.

85. At the community level, collective data ownership is increasingly emphasised. For indigenous and rural populations, data is not just an individual commodity but a communal resource, linked to land, culture, and identity. Movements such as the Indigenous Data Sovereignty initiative argue that communities should control access to data about them, ensuring it is used in ways that align with their traditions, consent, and aspirations.

86. Ethically, the Global South perspective reframes data not only as an economic asset, but also as a matter of justice and dignity. True sovereignty means being able to decide how data contributes to local innovation, whether by training AI in indigenous languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021), optimising agricultural practices, or guiding public health strategies. Without ownership, data risks becoming another extractive industry; with ownership, it becomes a foundation for equitable development.

87. So, the challenge for data sovereignty in the Global South is not only about protecting privacy or controlling servers. It is about reclaiming agency in the digital economy, resisting asymmetries of power, and ensuring that data serves as a resource for local empowerment, cultural preservation, and sustainable futures, rather than another chapter in the long history of exploitation.

Labour Impacts and Automation

88. Across the Global South, work is more than just a source of income, it is a social fabric, a safety net, and often a matter of survival. In this context, the arrival of automation and AI-driven technologies carries both promise and peril. Unlike in the Global North, where debates often focus on the displacement of high-tech or middle-income jobs, the Global South faces a dual reality: automation threatens fragile employment systems while also offering tools that could lift millions into more secure and dignified livelihoods.

89. Much of the labour force in the Global South is concentrated in informal economies, street vendors, agricultural workers, domestic staff, gig drivers, where formal contracts, protections, and social safety nets are scarce.

90. Here, automation could intensify vulnerability. For example, ride-hailing platforms introduce algorithmic management, shifting risks onto workers with little oversight or regulation. Automated decision making in recruitment or lending may deepen existing inequalities of caste, gender, or class. Unlike in advanced economies, there are fewer buffers, no strong welfare systems, weaker labour unions, and limited retraining programmes.

91. At the same time, the Global South plays a hidden role in the global AI economy through digital labour outsourcing. Millions of workers in Kenya, the Philippines, and other countries are employed in micro-tasking: labelling images, moderating harmful online content, or training chatbots.

92. This "ghost work" Gray, M. & Suri, S., 2019) is crucial for making AI systems functional, yet it is often invisible, poorly paid, and emotionally taxing. The ethical questions here are stark: while the North reaps the benefits of advanced AI, workers in the South carry the hidden human costs.

93. Yet the situation is not only one of harm. Automation also creates opportunities for leapfrogging. In agriculture, AI-enabled drones and predictive analytics could improve crop yields and climate resilience. In healthcare, automated diagnostic tools could extend services to under-served rural communities where doctors are scarce. In manufacturing, robotics, if locally integrated, could strengthen regional industries and reduce dependency on imports. The challenge lies in ensuring these gains do not remain concentrated in elite sectors but instead trickle down to the wider workforce.

94. From a governance perspective, the Global South faces a dilemma: how to embrace innovation without eroding livelihoods. Policymakers grapple with whether to regulate automation aggressively to protect jobs, or to encourage adoption in the hope of long-term growth. Many advocate a "just transition", developing policies that balance innovation with social protection, investment in re-skilling, and recognition of informal labour contributions.

95. Ethically, the conversation centres on dignity, fairness, and inclusion. Who decides which jobs are automated? Who benefits from productivity gains? Who bears the risks of uncertain digital work? Without addressing these questions, automation risks becoming a new frontier of inequality, reinforcing the very hierarchies it claims to transcend.

96. For the Global South, the future of labour under automation is not pre-determined. It is a contested terrain, shaped by choices about governance, international solidarity, and local innovation. The key lies in re-imagining automation not as an inevitable wave of displacement, but as a tool that, if governed with care and justice, could expand opportunities, enhance protections, and support sustainable development.

Environmental Implications

97. For the Global South, the promise of digital technologies and AI often arrives wrapped in paradox. On the one hand, these tools offer powerful ways to address pressing environmental challenges such as climate change, deforestation, water scarcity, and pollution that disproportionately affect the South. On the other hand, the very infrastructure that enables digital transformation such as data centres, rare earth mining, e-waste and energy-intensive computation, threatens to deepen ecological vulnerabilities in regions already enduring the most of global environmental crises (Couldry, N. & Mejias, U.A., 2019; Pinto, L.F. & Jardim, M.A.C., 2020).

98. The Global South has long been at the frontline of environmental injustice. Resource extraction to feed the global tech industry, lithium from Bolivia, cobalt from the Democratic Republic of Congo, comes at immense ecological and social cost. Mining depletes water resources, displaces communities, and leaves toxic legacies, while the bulk of profits flow elsewhere. In this sense, the digital economy risks becoming another chapter in extractivism, where environmental damage is localised in the South, yet the technological benefits accrue to the North.

99. E-waste is another burden that lands disproportionately in the Global South. Old smartphones, discarded servers, and obsolete computers often end up in informal recycling yards in Bangladesh, Ghana, or Nigeria, where workers, often children, strip metals by hand or burn plastics in unsafe conditions. The toxic fallout contaminates soils, rivers, and bodies, while the circular economy celebrated in global policy fora rarely materialises on the ground.

100. Yet AI and digital tools also offer unprecedented opportunities for environmental stewardship in the South. Satellite-based monitoring could track illegal logging in the Amazon or deforestation in Central Africa. AI-enabled climate models could help farmers anticipate droughts in East Africa or cyclones in South Asia.

101. Drones and sensors could guide sustainable fisheries or precision irrigation, reduce environmental pressures while support livelihoods. In contexts where state monitoring is weak and resources scarce, such tools could be transformative.

102. Still, these opportunities must be understood within a context of capacity and dependency. Who owns the satellites? Who controls the algorithms? If AI for climate resilience depends on foreign platforms, there is a risk that Global South nations remain dependent on Northern technology providers, undermining both sovereignty and sustainability. Moreover, the energy footprint of AI, from training large models to powering data centres, poses ethical dilemmas in regions where electricity access is already uneven and where renewable energy transitions are underfunded.

103. From an ethical and governance perspective, the environmental implications of digital technologies in the Global South revolve around equity, responsibility, and sustainability. Equity demands that communities benefiting least from digital transformation should not pay the highest ecological price. Responsibility requires multinational corporations to internalise the environmental costs of their supply chains rather than outsourcing them to vulnerable regions.

104. Sustainability calls for innovation that is low carbon, locally-governed, and aligned with broader development goals rather than narrowly profit driven. Ultimately, for the Global South, the environmental story of AI is not only about managing technological risks, it is about re-shaping global systems so that digital innovation supports climate justice, ecological resilience, and the right of communities to a healthy environment. Without such a re-framing, the digital future risks repeating the environmental injustices of the industrial past.

AI and Development Priorities

105. In much of the Global South, the conversation about AI is inseparable from the struggle for development. Unlike in the Global North, where AI is often framed as a driver of efficiency, competitiveness, or consumer convenience, countries across Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and the Pacific approach AI through the lens of urgent social and economic needs. Here, the question is less “How do we innovate faster?” and more “How could AI help us achieve dignity, equity, and sustainable futures?”

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

106. Development priorities in the Global South are wide-ranging: universal access to healthcare and education, food security, climate resilience, job creation, infrastructure, and poverty reduction. AI has the potential to accelerate progress in all these areas. Machine learning could improve crop yields and protect against climate shocks, diagnostic tools could extend healthcare to rural areas where doctors are scarce, and adaptive learning platforms could bring quality education to underserved communities. For many, AI represents not just a technological leap, but a chance to leapfrog development stages and overcome structural disadvantages that have persisted since colonial times.

107. Yet these opportunities are shadowed by profound challenges. AI solutions are too often designed in the Global North, optimised for wealthy contexts, and then exported to the South with little sensitivity to local realities.

108. This risks reproducing digital dependency rather than empowering self-determination. A weather-prediction app trained on North American data may not capture African climate patterns; a health chatbot built in English may exclude speakers of indigenous or local languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021). Without local adaptation and ownership, AI risks becoming another layer of technological dependency rather than a pathway to sovereignty. There is also the matter of competing priorities. For governments with limited budgets, investing in AI must be weighed against immediate needs, hospitals, schools, clean water, and roads.

109. The narrative of AI as a development accelerator only holds if it is embedded within broader strategies of inclusive growth, not pursued as a prestige project for elites or urban centres. Without deliberate policy choices, AI could deepen divides between rich and poor, urban and rural, connected and disconnected.

110. From a governance perspective, AI in the Global South must be aligned with national development plans and the SDGs. This means ensuring that AI deployment is not only technically sound, but also socially just, inclusive, and responsive to local needs. Regional collaboration, such as African Union frameworks, Latin American AI ethics (Birhane, A., 2021; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014) charters, or South–South knowledge sharing, is critical for amplifying bargaining power and ensuring that the benefits of AI are shared widely.

111. Ethically, the Global South approach to AI emphasises justice, equity, and sovereignty. It calls for re-framing AI from a tool of competition between global powers to a tool for human development. This means asking: How does AI reduce poverty? How does it empower women and marginalised groups? How does it strengthen climate resilience and protect cultural heritage?

112. For the Global South, AI is not an end in itself. It is a means to advance development priorities that are rooted in context, history, and aspiration. The challenge and the opportunity lies in shaping AI so that it does not simply mirror global inequalities but instead helps to redress them.

Intersectionality and Marginalised Experience

113. In the Global South, the story of AI and digital technologies cannot be told without recognising the layered realities of intersectionality. Here, social categories - gender, class, ethnicity, caste, disability, rurality, and indigeneity do not exist in isolation. They overlap and compound, shaping who benefits from technology, who is left behind, and who bears the risks.

114. While AI is often celebrated as a neutral and universal tool, in practice it reflects and reproduces the power structures of the societies in which it is deployed. In the Global South, where histories of colonialism, patriarchy, racial hierarchies, and economic inequality remain deeply embedded, AI systems could entrench the marginalisation of already vulnerable groups.

115. For example, women in rural areas often face digital exclusion due to limited access to devices, lower literacy levels, and entrenched cultural norms. An AI-driven agricultural advisory platform may promise to boost crop yields, but if it is designed only in dominant languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021), requires smartphones, or assumes access to reliable electricity, it risks bypassing women farmers altogether. Similarly, persons with disabilities may find themselves excluded if assistive technologies are unaffordable or not adapted to local contexts.

116. Intersectionality also reveals how algorithmic bias (Hao, K., 2021; West, S.M. *et al*., 2019) intersects with local forms of discrimination. In South Asia, facial recognition systems could amplify caste-based exclusions; in Latin America, predictive policing tools may disproportionately target Afro-descendant or indigenous communities; in parts of Africa, credit-scoring algorithms could penalise women or informal workers who lack access to formal banking. What may appear as "technical glitches" are in fact manifestations of deep-rooted inequalities, refracted through digital tools.

117. For indigenous peoples and minority groups, AI raises additional concerns about cultural erasure and data appropriation. Languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021), traditions, and knowledge systems are often excluded from digital platforms, leaving them invisible in the data economy. When AI systems are trained on global datasets that neglect these realities, they risk reinforcing a world where only dominant voices are heard and valued.

118. Yet, intersectionality in the Global South is not only a story of exclusion, but also a source of resilience and innovation. Marginalised communities have long developed strategies of survival and solidarity that could inform more inclusive approaches to technology.

119. Women's cooperatives, indigenous data sovereignty movements, disability rights networks, and grassroots digital literacy initiatives are pushing for AI to be built around principles of justice, consent, and community benefit.

120. From an ethical standpoint, intersectionality demands that AI governance frameworks in the Global South go beyond universalist principles to recognise specific lived experience. It is not enough to say, "AI should not discriminate."

Governance must ask: How does AI affect women in rural villages differently from men in urban centres? How do caste, race, and indigeneity shape access to digital opportunities? How do intersecting vulnerabilities compound harm?

121. For the Global South, placing intersectionality at the heart of AI governance is not an academic exercise, it is a survival imperative. It is the difference between a future in which AI widens the gap between privileged and marginalised groups, and one where technology is harnessed to dismantle historical injustices and amplify diverse voices.

3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1 Historical Context

122. To understand the voice of the Global South in debates on AI, it is necessary to trace a longer arc of history, one shaped by colonialism, post-colonial struggles, and the uneven distribution of technological power. The contemporary silence, or faintness, of Global South voices in AI governance is not accidental; it is the outcome of centuries of marginalisation in global knowledge production, technology transfer, and rule-setting.

123. The story begins with colonial extractivism. The foundations of the current digital economy were laid in patterns where resources flowed outward from the South to benefit the North. Just as gold, cotton, and rubber were extracted in earlier centuries, today it is data, rare earth minerals, and low-wage digital labour. The structures of dependency established during empire, where innovation and rule-making were centred in Europe and North America, continue to shape whose expertise is valued in AI and whose voices are ignored.

124. In the mid-20th century, as newly-independent states sought to break free from these hierarchies, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 (BRICS, 2022) called for a New International Economic Order. These movements were not about AI, they pre-dated it, but they crystallised Global South demands for greater self-determination, fairer trade, and sovereignty over knowledge and development. The debates on technology transfer, cultural autonomy, and equitable participation in global governance from that period are echoed in the AI discussions of today. The Global South voice on AI thus carries a lineage: it is less about catching up with innovation curves, and more about contesting historical asymmetries of power.

125. By the late 20th and early 21st centuries, as the internet spread, new digital divides emerged. While the Global North developed robust research and tech giants, many Global South states became primarily consumers of imported technologies. Outsourcing models positioned Southern workers as invisible contributors, call-centre agents in Bangladesh, data annotators in Kenya, or content moderators in the Philippines, yet rarely as authors of innovation or rule makers. The voice of the South in digital governance was thus often relegated to reactive positions: responding to Northern norms rather than shaping them.

126. Today, as AI accelerates, the historical silence of the Global South persists though is increasingly being challenged. The UNESCO global AI ethics recommendations, the African Union AI strategy, and the Latin America regional frameworks show attempts to assert collective positions. Still, these efforts struggle against entrenched dynamics: powerful Northern corporations dominate AI research and infrastructure, while Southern perspectives remain under-represented in global standard-setting bodies.

127. The historical context matters deeply because it reveals why the Global South voice on AI often emphasises sovereignty, justice, and inclusion. These are not abstract principles but direct responses to histories of exclusion, dependency, and exploitation.

128. Calls for data sovereignty echo anti-colonial struggles for land and resource control. Demands for inclusive AI governance recall the post-colonial fight for a more balanced world order. The Global South AI voice is thus shaped not only by contemporary inequalities but by a centuries-long struggle for recognition, autonomy, and fairness.

129. Consequently, the Global South engagement with AI cannot be understood as a late arrival to the table of innovation. It is instead the continuation of a long historical narrative: one where technology, governance, and justice have always been intertwined, and where the fight is less about adopting the tools of someone else than about re-shaping global systems to reflect diverse experiences, values, and aspirations.

3.2 Recent Advances

130. In recent years, the Global South has begun to find a stronger, more coordinated voice in the global conversation on AI. This shift is not yet a full transformation, the balance of power still lies heavily with the Global North and its technology giants, but the advances are significant. They signal that the South is no longer content to remain a passive consumer of imported technologies and governance frameworks. Instead, it is increasingly asserting itself as a co-author of global AI futures.

131. One major advance has been the development of regional AI strategies and coalitions. The African Union Continental Strategy for Artificial Intelligence represents an unprecedented effort to articulate a shared vision for AI that reflects African priorities, such as healthcare, agriculture, climate resilience, and inclusive growth.

132. Similarly, Latin American states have begun forming collaborative initiatives, with countries such as Brazil, Chile, and Mexico leading regional dialogue that link AI development to social justice and democratic values.

133. In Asia, Indonesia and others are aligning AI to their national development plans. These initiatives collectively mark a departure from fragmented, country-level responses toward regional solidarity, amplifying the bargaining power of the South in international governance spaces.

134. At the global level, Southern voices have also become more visible in multilateral fora. In the UNESCO 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, the first global normative instrument on AI, saw active participation from Global South states, which ensured that issues such as inequality, cultural diversity, and development needs were foregrounded. Within the UN and OECD dialogues, Southern delegations are increasingly framing AI not only as a matter of ethics but also as a question of equity and sovereignty, demanding recognition of digital divides, data colonialism, and historical injustice.

135. Another advance lies in the rise of South-based research and innovation platforms. Universities and start-ups in Bengaluru, Cairo, Lagos, Nairobi, and São Paulo are building AI tools tailored to local realities, from health diagnostics in under-resourced clinics to natural language processing for indigenous and regional languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021).

136. While these face funding and infrastructure gaps, they demonstrate that the Global South is not simply importing technology but also producing knowledge and solutions of its own. Grassroots innovation, often tied to local needs, is creating a body of work that challenges the assumption that AI expertise flows only from North to South.

137. Civil society and advocacy networks in the South have also become increasingly vocal. Movements concerning indigenous data sovereignty, digital rights , and algorithmic justice are shaping debates from below. Activists in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia are documenting harms, exposing biases (Hao, K. 2021; West, S.M. *et al*., 2019), and calling for participatory governance approaches. These voices are not just resisting Northern dominance but re-framing what "responsible AI" means in societies marked by inequality and exclusion.

138. Despite these advances, challenges remain. Representation in global standard-setting bodies is still uneven; funding for research is limited; and the dominance of Northern corporations in infrastructure and platforms continues. But compared to a decade ago, the Global South now speaks with a clearer, more coordinated voice. Its interventions increasingly highlight that AI must be aligned with SDGs and that equity and justice are not afterthoughts but central design principles, and that local knowledge must shape global AI governance (ITU, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

139. Consequently, recent advances of the AI voice of the Global South show a shift from silence and dependency toward agency and influence. It is a voice grounded in history, sharpened by lived experience of inequality, and animated by the hope that AI could serve not only as a driver of innovation, but also as a tool for building fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable societies.

3.3 Gaps in the Literature

140. The literature on AI and the Global South has grown quickly, but its centre of gravity still leans northward. Much of what is cited about "Southern perspectives" is filtered through Northern institutions, English-language venues, and case studies that orbit a few familiar cities - a landscape where certain questions echo loudly while others barely register.

141. First, the category problem. "Global South" is used as if it were a single vantage point. Academics often treat Brazil, Nigeria, and South Africa as proxies for a vast and varied world, flattening differences in political economy, colonial legacies, conflict exposure, and state capacity. Gulf monarchies, small island states (Pacific and Caribbean), and Francophone regions are routinely footnoted rather than centred.

142. Second, the evidence gap - there is an abundance of normative argument, ethics principles, high-level road maps, critical essays, and a relative scarcity of empirical work that traces how AI is actually procured, adapted, governed, and resisted in specific places. There is a lack of longitudinal studies of policy implementation, causal evaluations of AI social impacts, and ethnographies of everyday interactions with automated systems outside capital cities.

143. Informal economies, where much Southern labour lives, remain under-researched.

144. Third, the language and venue bias indicates that English dominates. Insights published in Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Kiswahili, Hindi, or Indonesian circulate weakly into the "global" canon. Regional policy briefs, community reports, and indigenous academic often live in grey literature that is cited sparingly or not at all. This narrows what counts as evidence and who is legible as a knower.

145. Private-sector deployments, security-sector uses, and cross-border platform governance are black boxes. Little is known about dataset provenance from Southern populations, benefit-sharing arrangements, labour conditions in data work, or procurement clauses that shape sovereignty (hosting, escrow, exit options). Corporate non-disclosure agreements and fragmented freedom of information regimes keep the archive thin.

146. Research clusters around "success stories" and readily measurable sectors (health pilots, agriculture tech, digital ID), while harms that are diffuse or cumulative, chilling effects, exclusion from credit, linguistic erasure, surveillance spillovers, are harder to quantify and thus under-documented. Rural, peri-urban, and conflict-affected settings are especially absent.

147. Much mapping of AI strategies in the South treat policy as text rather than as politics. There are limited accounts of how coalitions form, how donors, standards bodies, and vendors shape agendas, or how South–South alliances negotiate with platforms. The political economy of compute (energy, chips, data centres) is discussed in global terms, rarely tied to local grid stress, land rights, or industrial policy trade-offs.

148. Intersectionality is more in name than practice. While gender, caste, race, disability, and indigeneity are acknowledged, few studies systematically examine their intersections in AI design, access, and harm. Indigenous data sovereignty is often invoked, less often operationalised or evaluated.

149. There are snapshots, not time series. Pilots are documented; maturations, failures, and afterlives are not. Comparative work across sub-regions (e.g., Sahel versus Horn; Andean versus Southern Cone; Anglophone versus Francophone West Africa) is thin, leaving adaptation pathways and path dependencies under-theorised.

150. Analyses of AI safety, risk, and standard setting tend to track US–EU–China dynamics. Participation, influence, and veto points for Southern states and civil society in ISO/IEC, ITU, OECD/UN processes are poorly mapped. It is seldom asked whose risks are being prioritised, at what cost, and with which remedies.

151. The carbon, water, and land footprints of AI infrastructure in Southern contexts, co-located data centres, satellite ground stations, cable landings, are under-examined. Literature links AI to climate solutions yet lacks local lifecycle assessments and governance models for environmental justice in citing decisions.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

152. A sharper research agenda would disaggregate the "Global South." It would build typologies (resource-rich states; small island developing states; conflict-affected; lower-middle-income industrialisers) and study how AI governance travels across them.

153. From data collection to model deployment to grievance redress, trace contracts, labour, datasets, compute, and enforcement. Funds are required for translation, publishing in regional venues, and treating community-led and indigenous academics as primary sources.

154. In particular, comparative procurement studies are needed, as are dataset audits, and labour ethnographies, especially in outsourcing and content moderation. Indicators are needed for exclusion, chilling effects, and linguistic harm. Donors, vendors, standards bodies, and South–South blocs need to be mapped; studying bargaining power, dependency, and exit options. Disaggregated impact reporting and participatory evaluation with marginalised groups is required.

155. Finally, longitudinal panels of policies and projects are required; repositories of failures and reversals, not just showcase pilots. Local life cycle assessments for AI infrastructure; governance tools for siting, water use, and energy mix are mandatory.

156. Until these gaps are addressed, the "AI voice of the Global South" will remain audible mostly as an echo, heard in principle, faint in practice. Filling the archive with granular, multi-lingual, power-aware, and longitudinal work is how that voice becomes not only louder, but also authoritative.

4 ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

4.1 Voices

157. The emergence of an authentic Global South voice on AI depends not only on policy documents or regional strategies, but also on listening, deeply and inclusively, to the people who experience, govern, study, and build these technologies. Interviews and consultations across a spectrum of stakeholders reveal the diversity of perspectives that together form this voice, each offering unique insights into what AI should mean for the South.

158. Policymakers often stress sovereignty and alignment with national development agendas. For them, consultations highlight concerns about dependency on foreign technologies, risks of data flowing outside national borders, and the need to ensure AI serves priorities such as health, agriculture, climate resilience, and youth employment. They emphasise that AI governance must not be imposed from abroad, but adapted to local contexts where resources, legal frameworks, and state capacities vary widely.

159. Academics and researchers bring critical reflection and technical expertise. Their voices reveal the gaps in research infrastructure, limited funding, and the challenges of publishing in English-dominated spaces. Yet they also underscore the creativity of local innovation, whether developing natural language processing for under-represented languages, or testing low-cost AI applications in health and education. For many, consultations highlight the urgency of building South-based knowledge networks so that the region contributes to AI not only as a consumer, but as a producer of theory and practice.

160. Civil society actors offer a sharp reminder that AI is never neutral. From digital rights groups to feminist networks, their contributions focus on equity, justice, and accountability. They call attention to surveillance, algorithmic bias, exclusion from services, and the dangers of widening digital divides. Their consultations underline that AI governance must be participatory, transparent, and attentive to the lived realities of marginalised groups.

161. Technologists and entrepreneurs present a more pragmatic voice. Start-ups and innovators in the Global South see AI as both an opportunity and a constraint. They point to untapped potential in solving local problems, whether through AI-driven agriculture tools, fintech for unbanked populations, or platforms for local languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021). Yet they also describe barriers: lack of venture funding, dependence on global cloud providers, and the difficulty of scaling innovation beyond pilot projects. Their voices highlight the importance of platform-building and supportive regulation.

162. Affected communities - those on the receiving end of AI systems in welfare, education, healthcare, or policing, ground the conversation in lived experience. For them, interviews surface issues of accessibility, consent, trust, and harm. Communities often describe AI systems as opaque or externally imposed, raising fears of exclusion or misuse. At the same time, they express hope that if designed with them, not just for them, AI could become a tool of empowerment and dignity.

163. Indigenous and marginalised groups bring perspectives often missing in mainstream debates. Their voices emphasise collective rights over data, cultural preservation, and the risk of digital erasure. Indigenous leaders stress that AI must respect knowledge sovereignty and linguistic diversity, while marginalised groups highlight the compounding risks they face, whether through algorithmic discrimination, exclusion from access, or exploitative digital labour. Their consultations push the Global South AI voice toward deeper ethical commitments rooted in justice, recognition, and community agency.

164. Taken together, these voices demonstrate that the Global South's AI voice is plural, layered, and dynamic. It is not a single narrative, rather a chorus of policymakers demanding sovereignty, researchers calling for recognition, civil society insisting on justice, entrepreneurs seeking opportunity, and communities defending dignity and inclusion. For AI governance to be legitimate and effective, these voices must not only be heard, but woven into decision-making at local, regional, and global levels.

165. As is apparent, the "voice of the Global South" on AI is not a single monologue. It is a tapestry of regional perspectives, each marked by its histories, aspirations, and vulnerabilities. While Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands share structural inequalities compared with the Global North, their AI priorities and concerns are shaped by context. Together, they also form a plural voice that seeks to reframe AI as a tool for development, justice, and sovereignty rather than as a frontier of competition among global powers.

Sub-Saharan Africa

166. In Sub-Saharan Africa, AI is often discussed in terms of opportunity and dependency . Governments and innovators highlight the potential of AI to transform agriculture, healthcare, and financial inclusion. AI could help farmers adapt to climate change, expand access to diagnostics in rural clinics, or extend credit to the unbanked. Yet consultations reveal a strong concern with dependency : most infrastructure is owned by multinational corporations, data often flows out of the continent, and research ecosystems struggle against chronic underfunding. The African Union AI strategy (African Union, 2023; UNECA, 2023) reflects a collective voice, one that insists AI must serve Africa development goals, protect its cultural and linguistic diversity, and resist becoming another layer of digital colonialism.

South and Southeast Asia

167. Across South and Southeast Asia (excluding those with economies closer to the Global North), the AI voice is marked by scale, inequality, and experimentation. With vast populations and dynamic start-ups, countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Vietnam see AI as both a development accelerator and a social disruptor. National strategies often frame AI in terms of education, health, and job creation, yet grassroots consultations point to anxieties about automation, algorithmic bias , and the precarious nature of digital labour. The regional voice is distinct in its insistence that AI governance grapples with intersectional inequalities, caste, ethnicity, gender, rural-urban divides that shape access to technology and amplify risks of exclusion.

Latin America and the Caribbean

168. The Latin America and Caribbean voice emphasises justice, democracy, and rights. Regional debates often link AI to broader struggles against inequality, corruption, and authoritarian drift. Civil society actors in Brazil, Mexico, and the Caribbean islands stress algorithmic transparency, data protection, and participatory governance. There is a strong discourse of AI for democracy, ensuring technologies do not erode accountability or reproduce structural racism and exclusion. At the same time, the region highlights opportunities: AI in environmental monitoring, urban planning, and public health. Yet here too, the concern is dependency : without regional cooperation, AI risks deepening reliance on external platforms and leaving smaller economies, especially in the Caribbean, without agency in setting the terms of digital transformation.

Pacific Islands

169. For the Pacific Islands, the AI voice is both urgent and fragile. These states face existential threats from climate change, with rising seas and extreme weather threatening livelihoods and sovereignty. AI could play a vital role in climate modelling, disaster preparedness, and sustainable resource management. Yet consultations show that the region is under-represented in global debates, especially Francophone islands, which are doubly marginalised within both Pacific and global dialogue. Limited infrastructure, small markets, and dependence on external technologies amplify vulnerability. Still, the Pacific perspective carries unique ethical weight: it insists that AI governance must be tied to climate justice, cultural preservation, and the survival of small island nations, not only to the priorities of global powers.

170. So, across these regions, common threads emerge: concerns over dependency and sovereignty; demands for inclusion of local languages (Joshi *et al*., 2020; Munyua, 2021), cultures, and knowledge; and aspirations to use AI for development and justice rather than for profit or power. Yet each region speaks with its own cadence; Africa with its emphasis on resisting digital colonialism, South and Southeast Asia on inequality and scale, Latin America and the Caribbean on democracy and rights, and the Pacific on climate survival and cultural preservation. Together, these voices have the potential to enrich the global AI conversation, challenging it to move beyond narrow Northern paradigms and toward a truly plural vision of technology and humanity, as a shared future.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

171. The voice of the Global South in debates on AI is not only about identifying risks and inequities, but it is also about imagining solutions. Across regions and communities, six interconnected themes emerge, each carrying both challenges and pathways forward.

AI Governance and Ethics

172. Global South actors often describe existing AI governance as an imported framework, rules and norms designed in the Global North, then applied to Southern contexts. The solution is not wholesale rejection rather contextual adaptation. Governance must be locally grounded, participatory, and sensitive to development priorities.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

173. Possible approaches include:

- Establishing regional governance frameworks (e.g., African Union, CARICOM, ASEAN) to build collective bargaining power;
- Creating multi-stakeholder councils where policymakers, technologists, civil society, and communities co-shape ethical guidelines; and
- Promoting legal interoperability with laws aligned enough with global norms to enable cooperation yet tailored to local realities of infrastructure and rights.

Data Sovereignty and Ownership

174. Data are the resource for AI, but in the Global South it often flows outward, creating value elsewhere. Solutions require reclaiming control through data sovereignty .

175. Key measures include:

- Adopting data localisation policies that ensure sensitive data remains subject to domestic laws;
- Developing community data trusts, especially for Indigenous and marginalised groups, to safeguard collective rights; and
- Building regional data-sharing platforms, where Southern countries pool resources and negotiate equitable terms with global corporations.

Labour Impacts and Automation

176. The Global South faces a double challenge: the risk of job displacement from automation, and the exploitation of low-paid digital labour in annotation and moderation.

177. Solutions must centre on a just transition:

- Designing re-training and upskilling programmes tied to real market opportunities, not abstract promises;
- Establishing labour standards for digital work (fair wages, protections, recognition of hidden labour; and
- Supporting AI applications that complement human work, especially in informal economies where livelihoods are precarious.

Environmental Implications

178. AI could support climate resilience in the South, though its infrastructure, data centres, rare earth mining, and e-waste, creates environmental burdens.

179. Possible solutions demand climate justice principles:

- Conducting life cycle assessments before major AI infrastructure projects;
- Prioritising renewable-powered data centres and encouraging sustainable procurement practices; and
- Ensuring environmental safeguards in global supply chains, so that mining and e-waste do not externalise harms onto vulnerable communities.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

AI and Development Priorities

180. For the Global South, AI must be more than a tool of efficiency; it must advance development goals such as health, education, and poverty reduction.

181. Solutions should focus on alignment:

- Embedding AI strategies into national development plans and the SDGs;
- Supporting South–South cooperation to share low-cost, locally-adapted solutions; and
- Funding grassroots innovation ecosystems so that communities could shape AI to meet their own needs, from agriculture apps to health diagnostics.

Intersectionality and Marginalised Experiences

182. AI risks deepening existing inequalities, especially where multiple forms of marginalisation intersect.

183. Solutions require designing with, not for, affected groups:

- Mandating inclusive consultation processes in AI policy and project design, ensuring representation of women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and rural populations;
- Developing bias auditing frameworks that reflect local social hierarchies, not just Northern benchmarks; and
- Supporting multi-lingual AI systems to protect cultural and linguistic diversity (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021).

184. These thematic areas are not isolated. Data sovereignty underpins development priorities; labour protections are linked to intersectionality; environmental safeguards intersect with governance and ethics. The solutions are therefore most powerful when pursued in integrated, regional, and participatory ways.

185. The Global South voice does not call for adopting AI at any cost, nor for rejecting it outright. Instead, it calls for re-balancing power: ensuring AI governance serves development rather than dependency , justice rather than exploitation, and sustainability rather than extractivism Couldry, N. & Mejias, U.A., 2019; Pinto, L.F. & Jardim, M.A.C., 2020).

186. In offering solutions, the South challenges the global AI community to shift its centre of gravity, toward plural ethics, shared sovereignty, and futures shaped not only in Silicon Valley or Brussels, but in Bogotá, Dhaka, Lagos and Suva as well.

4.3 Who is driving the AI agenda

187. The global conversation on AI is not just about algorithms, data, or innovation, it is also about who sets the agenda. Across both North and South, a constellation of actors shapes how AI is developed, governed, and applied. But the balance of power and the degree of agency differ sharply between the two contexts.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

188. **In the Global North**, the AI agenda is overwhelmingly driven by large corporations. Tech giants in the United States and Europe, companies such as Google, Microsoft, Meta, Amazon, and OpenAI, dominate research, infrastructure, and global markets. Their priorities often set the pace: scaling foundation models, creating cloud services, and lobbying for favourable regulation. These firms wield immense influence in international standard-setting fora, often more than states themselves.

189. Governments in the North, however, are playing an increasingly assertive role. The European Union AI Act and the United States executive actions on AI show a determination to regulate risk, protect rights, and safeguard competitiveness. In China, state leadership drives the agenda directly, integrating AI into national strategies for economic growth, surveillance , and geopolitical influence. Northern governments also leverage foreign policy to export their governance models, whether through the EU regulatory diplomacy, the US partnerships, or the China Belt and Road digital initiatives.

190. Academics and researchers in the North also contribute heavily to shaping discourse, producing most of the innovative research published in global journals and conferences. Their proximity to corporate labs, well-funded universities, and policy institutions gives them disproportionate visibility in global debates.

191. Civil society organisations and NGOs in the North focus on issues such as safety, fairness, accountability, human rights, and sustainability. They push back against corporate concentration and call for ethical safeguards, but their advocacy often resonates more loudly in global fora than equivalent voices from the South.

192. So, the North AI agenda is driven by corporate dominance, state regulation, academic innovation, and civil society pressure, with corporations frequently leading and governments seeking to catch up.

193. **In the Global South**, the drivers of the AI agenda are more diverse and less balanced, with foreign actors often setting the terms. Foreign corporations dominate infrastructure, platforms, and data flows. Cloud hosting, software, and large-scale AI models are overwhelmingly controlled by Northern or Chinese companies. Many AI projects in agriculture, health, or education are funded or piloted by external firms, which means priorities are shaped externally and adapted locally, rather than originating in Southern agendas.

194. Governments in the South increasingly craft national AI strategies such as the Brazil and Kenya frameworks, or the Egypt AI Council, though their implementation is constrained by limited funding, infrastructure, and bargaining power. Wealthier Southern states, such as the Gulf monarchies, stand out for investing heavily in AI to diversify economies, sometimes acting more like Northern players than Southern ones.

195. Local entrepreneurs and technologists provide bottom-up energy, designing AI tools for local challenges, health diagnostics in rural clinics, natural language processing for under-represented languages, or fintech for unbanked populations.

196. But their growth is constrained by structural barriers: scarce venture capital, reliance on foreign cloud services, and lack of enabling platforms.

197. Academics and researchers in the South contribute valuable insights into contextual challenges, bias, linguistic diversity, data sovereignty but face barriers in global visibility due to underfunding, language dominance, and limited access to publishing platforms.

198. Civil society and NGOs play a vital role in ensuring that AI adoption does not bypass questions of justice and inclusion. Digital rights groups, feminist collectives, and Indigenous organisations highlight risks of surveillance , exclusion, and cultural erasure. Their advocacy insists that AI governance in the South must be participatory and rooted in lived realities.

199. In many Southern contexts, international organisations and donors also drive the AI agenda. Institutions such as UNESCO, the World Bank, or development agencies provide funding, set ethical frameworks, and offer technical support. While these engagements help build capacity, they could also reproduce dependency by aligning local AI strategies with donor priorities rather than community needs.

200. So, the contrast between North and South lies in agency and agenda-setting power. In the North, corporations and governments are the primary agenda drivers, shaping global norms and exporting governance models. In the South, the AI agenda is more contested, shaped externally by foreign corporations and international institutions, and internally by governments, innovators, researchers, and civil society struggling to assert sovereignty and contextual relevance.

201. Together, these dynamics reveal a fundamental asymmetry: while the North debates how to regulate AI it has built, the South debates how to adapt AI it has inherited. The challenge for the future is to rebalance this equation, ensuring that Southern voices move from adaptation to authorship, shaping not only how AI is used locally, but also how it is governed globally.

4.4 What languages dominate AI discourse?

202. The global discourse on AI is shaped not only by corporations, governments, and institutions, but also by the languages in which debates take place. Here, a clear hierarchy emerges: English dominates overwhelmingly, followed by a smaller though significant presence of Chinese, French, Spanish, and a few others. This linguistic imbalance is more than a matter of communication, it structures who is heard, whose research circulates, and whose priorities shape the global agenda.

English

203. AI research, policy debates, and ethical frameworks are overwhelmingly conducted in English. The majority of top academic journals, conferences, and corporate white papers are published in English, reinforcing its role as the gatekeeper language.

204. For many in the Global South, participation requires fluency in English, which often excludes local experts, policymakers, or community voices who operate primarily in other languages. This not only narrows participation but also risks distorting the substance of debates, as ideas must be translated into frameworks most legible to Anglophone audiences.

Chinese

205. Chinese is the other major pole of AI discourse, reflecting the scale of China research, corporate presence, and state-led agenda. Within China, a vast body of AI literature, policy, and technical development unfolds in Mandarin. Yet much of this remains isolated from global discourse due to linguistic and political divides. Thus, while Chinese is central to AI development, it has less influence in shaping shared global ethics debates, which remain Anglophone-centric.

Other international languages

206. French and Spanish play modest though important roles. Francophone Africa, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands engage through French, often tied to European policy frameworks. Spanish is key across Latin America , where a growing AI ethics and governance community is publishing regionally. Yet, research in these languages often circulates regionally rather than globally, limiting its reach into mainstream debates dominated by English.

Southern and Indigenous languages

207. Perhaps the most striking silence is that of Southern and Indigenous languages. Very little AI discourse happens in Swahili, Amharic, Quechua, Samoan, or other languages of the Global South. This marginalisation is twofold: these languages are under-represented, not only in AI research and governance debates, but also in the datasets and models that underpin the technology itself.

208. As a result, communities speaking these languages are often excluded from shaping AI policies and from benefiting fully from AI applications.

209. So, the dominance of English, and to a lesser extent Mandarin, reinforces power asymmetries. It centralises authority in the hands of actors who are fluent in these languages, while sidelining knowledge expressed in other linguistic traditions. This affects everything from which ethical principles gain traction, to which research is cited, to how communities experience AI in practice. The absence of diverse languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020) in AI discourse mirrors the absence of diverse values, raising the risk of "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, M., 2007), where entire ways of knowing are rendered invisible.

210. For the Global South, reclaiming voice in AI debates requires linguistic inclusion: supporting translation, valuing research published in local languages and ensuring AI governance frameworks are accessible in the languages of affected communities. Equally, building AI tools that recognise, and process under-represented languages is essential for preserving cultural diversity and ensuring that AI serves all of humanity, not just those who speak its dominant tongues.

4.5 What barriers exist to local and national participation in global AI governance?

211. The governance of AI is often presented as a global project, yet in practice, participation is far from equal. Many states and communities, particularly in the Global South, struggle to have their voices heard, their priorities recognised, and their needs reflected in international frameworks. A closer look reveals a web of barriers that restrict meaningful local and national participation in shaping global AI governance .

Structural and Economic Barriers

212. Global AI governance fora, whether hosted by the OECD, the G7, or UN agencies, require financial resources, technical expertise, and diplomatic capacity. Many low, and middle-income countries simply lack the budgets to sustain delegations or to maintain specialised AI policy units within government. Attending international conferences or standards bodies meetings could be prohibitively costly, particularly for small island states or conflict-affected countries. As a result, participation is often intermittent or symbolic rather than consistent and influential.

Technical and Knowledge Asymmetries

213. AI is a highly technical field, and governance discussions are often saturated with technical jargon. Countries with limited research ecosystems or underfunded universities struggle to keep pace with rapidly evolving debates about large models, data protection, or algorithmic auditing.

214. Without strong local research bases, policymakers depend on external expertise, usually from Northern corporations or consultants, which skews agendas toward imported priorities rather than locally defined concerns.

Linguistic and Cultural Barriers

215. The dominance of English (and to some extent Mandarin and French) in global AI discourse limits participation for those who work primarily in other languages . Key reports, ethical frameworks, and technical standards are rarely translated, excluding local actors and reinforcing a cycle in which only Anglophone expertise is legible. This linguistic dominance contributes to what some describe as “epistemic injustice”: knowledge rooted in southern or indigenous contexts is often sidelined or dismissed.

Power Imbalances in Global Institutions

216. Many of the key global fora shaping AI governance are driven by Northern states and corporations. The G7 Hiroshima AI process, the EU regulatory diplomacy, or US-led initiatives reflect priorities of advanced economies.

217. Even multilateral efforts, such as the UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics, struggle with power asymmetries: southern states are present though often lack the leverage to shape final texts. Corporate actors, with their vast resources, frequently dominate multi-stakeholder dialogues, outmatching the influence of small states or grassroots organisations.

Digital Infrastructure Dependency

218. Because many Global South countries rely on foreign platforms, cloud services, and datasets, their bargaining power in governance negotiations is weakened. Without domestic alternatives, local voices risk being confined to "implementation concerns" rather than shaping upstream rules about ownership, accountability, or data rights. This dependency makes it difficult to articulate sovereign positions in global debates.

Limited inclusion of Civil Society and Marginalised Groups

219. Within countries themselves, participation is often skewed. Consultations are dominated by policymakers and business elites, while civil society, Indigenous groups, women, and rural communities are sidelined. This internal exclusion means that even when states do attend global governance fora, they rarely speak with a mandate that reflects the diversity of their societies. The absence of participatory national processes becomes a barrier to authentic global representation.

Short-Term Priorities versus Long-Term Governance

220. Governments in the Global South often face pressing development and humanitarian challenges: food security, debt crises, health system fragility. Against these urgent needs, AI governance could appear abstract or secondary.

221. Limited capacity is thus diverted elsewhere, leaving global AI governance as a low-priority agenda item. This structural reality reduces Southern participation in shaping long-term frameworks.

222. So, the result of these barriers is a cycle of marginalisation: countries and communities that are least represented in global AI governance are often those most vulnerable to its consequences, whether through bias ed algorithms, exploitative data practices, or uneven distribution of benefits. The absence of local and national voices not only weakens the legitimacy of global governance but also risks reproducing digital colonialism under the guise of universal ethics.

4.6 Are there any "solutions" or pathways that could realistically help the Global South?

223. There are several pathways to strengthening the Global South "voice" in AI Governance. AI is rapidly becoming a foundational technology shaping economies, societies, and geopolitics. Yet, debates on AI governance remain dominated by actors in the Global North, particularly the United States, European Union, and China, who set standards, frameworks, and market priorities. Without intentional pathways for inclusion, the Global South risks being relegated to the role of policy-taker rather than policy-shaper. Several realistic solutions could help amplify the Global South voice in shaping global AI governance .

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

224. Regional Cooperation and Collective Voice through:

- ***Pooling influence:*** Regional blocs such as the African Union, ASEAN, MERCOSUR, and the Caribbean Community could adopt common AI policy positions, enabling smaller nations to negotiate with stronger leverage in international fora; and
- ***Shared resources:*** Joint initiatives in AI research, regulatory sandboxes, and ethical frameworks could create credible counterweights to Global North–centric standards.

225. South–South Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange allow for:

- ***Capacity-building networks:*** Universities, think tanks, and technical institutes in the Global South could form partnerships to exchange expertise, train policymakers, and share regulatory best practice; and
- ***Policy solidarity:*** Shared positions on data sovereignty , access to AI infrastructure, and ethical safeguards could strengthen the bargaining power of the South.

226. Leveraging Multilateral and UN Platforms allow for:

- Engagement in standard setting: Active participation in bodies such as UNESCO (UNESCO, 2021), the ITU, and the UN Secretary-General AI Advisory Body allows Global South countries to shape emerging global principles; and
- Coalitions within global fora: Such as the G77 or the Non-Aligned Movement in previous decades, new coalitions could push for "inclusive AI governance " clauses in international agreements.

227. Development-Oriented AI Governance Agendas allow for:

- ***Linking AI to SDGs:*** By framing AI governance in terms of development priorities, such as health, education, agriculture, and climate resilience, the Global South could ensure its concerns resonate in broader global debates; and
- ***Advocating fairness in AI access:*** Policies could emphasise equitable distribution of compute power, affordable data infrastructure, and open-source AI tools.

228. Partnerships with Civil Society and Private Sector offer the opportunity for:

- ***Civil society leadership:*** NGOs, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements from the Global South could highlight ethical and rights-based concerns often overlooked in global standards; and
- ***Inclusive innovation ecosystems:*** Encouraging responsible AI start-ups, public–private partnerships, and diaspora-driven AI initiatives could provide practical examples of locally-rooted governance.

229. Strategic Use of "Norm Entrepreneurship" offer the opportunity for:

- ***Innovative regulatory models:*** The Global South could pioneer new governance approaches, such as community-centred AI ethics boards, participatory data trusts, or context-sensitive bias audits, which gain international attention; and
- ***Shaping the narrative:*** By centring debates on equity, justice, and digital sovereignty, Global South actors could redefine what "responsible AI" means globally.

230. So, while resource asymmetries remain a significant challenge, the Global South is not without agency. By working collectively at the regional and multilateral level, aligning AI governance with development agendas, and leveraging both civil society and innovative policy approaches, the Global South could meaningfully shape the norms, standards, and ethical frameworks of AI governance .

231. The key lies not only in responding to the agendas of the Global North but also in proactively articulating alternative pathways that reflect diverse social realities and aspirations.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

232. There are several considerations that need to be explored and addressed in the context of finding a voice for the Global South.

233. Informed consent has long been considered a cornerstone of ethical practice in medicine, research, and now, increasingly, in the governance of digital technologies and AI. It is meant to ensure that individuals understand and agree to how their data is collected, processed, and used. Yet in practice, consent often becomes a hollow exercise, reduced to legalistic "tick-the-box" agreements written in inaccessible language. For countries in the Global South, this issue is not only about individual protection but also about collective voice and agency in a system where the rules are largely written elsewhere.

234. The difficulties in securing genuine informed consent are particularly acute in the Global South. Digital literacy levels vary widely, and many communities lack the resources to fully grasp the implications of complex AI systems. People are often asked to "consent" to platforms and services not out of choice but because these systems are necessary for access to jobs, benefits, or even basic government services. In this sense, consent is less an act of empowerment than a condition of survival, highlighting the asymmetry between powerful technology providers and vulnerable populations.

235. To make informed consent meaningful in these contexts requires rethinking the concept itself. Rather than treating consent as an individual transaction, many Global South actors have argued for broader notions of community and collective consent. For example, when health or agricultural data are drawn from entire populations, or when indigenous knowledge is digitised, the question is not simply whether one individual agrees but whether communities as a whole have the right to decide how their data are used.

236. Similarly, at the national level, countries in the Global South are increasingly framing data sovereignty as a matter of collective consent, insisting that decisions about data flows and AI deployments must be negotiated with them, rather than imposed by external actors.

237. There are already signs of how this shift could influence global debates. Some regions, such as the African Union, have begun to craft frameworks that embed data protection and consent in ways that reflect local realities.

238. Others are experimenting with innovative approaches such as data cooperatives or participatory data stewardship, which give communities a more active role in decision making. These efforts demonstrate that the Global South could act as a "norm entrepreneur," offering alternative models of consent that are more context-sensitive and equitable than the often-rigid frameworks exported from the Global North.

239. Ultimately, informed consent in the context of AI governance must be understood as more than a technical or legal safeguard. For the Global South, it is a political tool that strengthens voice and agency. When reconceived as a collective right, informed consent offers a pathway to resist forms of digital extraction and data colonialism while affirming the dignity of individuals and communities. By insisting on this expanded understanding, the Global South could reshape AI governance so that it reflects not just the priorities of a few powerful actors, but the aspirations of societies worldwide.

240. Despite these legal advances and emerging practices, there are structural and normative tensions that limit how "informed consent" plays out in practice, in AI governance :

- ***Voluntary versus necessity***: When access to services, government benefits, or economic participation depends on handing over data, consent becomes coerced or pseudo-consent;
- ***Linguistic and educational barriers:*** Consent forms are often in legal or technical language, not translated into local languages or cultural idioms; many people lack the background to understand implications;
- ***Opacity of AI systems***: Because AI systems often involve complex, opaque decision-making (or are "black boxes"), individuals may consent without understanding actual uses, risks, or downstream effects;
- ***Institutional capacity and enforcement***: Even where laws are well written, enforcement bodies may be underfunded, lack independence, or be subject to political pressure;
- ***Collective versus individual consent***: Legal regimes often focus narrowly on individual consent, yet many communities, especially indigenous or marginalised ones, see data in communal frames (knowledge, traditions, group identity). The absence of legally-recognised community consent leaves a gap; and
- ***Global pressures and extractive actors:*** Global tech companies or foreign governments may claim data access, or leverage cross-border data flows in ways that undercut local control, even when consent is nominally required.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

241. To ensure that informed consent becomes a tool of voice and agency, not just compliance, several pathways suggest themselves:

- ***Legal reforms that embed community consent***: Recognise in law the rights of communities (particularly indigenous ones) to give, withhold, or revoke consent for data uses that affect them collectively. This could be done through statutes, constitutional recognition, or customary law integration;
- ***Contextualised consent materials:*** Consent documentation and processes must be localised, linguistically, culturally, and conceptually. Visual, oral, communal forms of explanation; leveraging community leaders or local civil society organisations; translating into local languages using examples meaningful to local populations;
- ***Transparency and post-consent rights***: Beyond initial consent, mechanisms for audit, recourse, data subject rights (to see what data are held, how used, to correct, delete) must be robust and accessible. This includes ensuring that consent is not irrevocable or irreversible by default;
- ***Capacity building and public education***: Investing in digital literacy, public awareness, and civic education to enable citizens to understand what data consent implicates;
- ***Strong, independent regulatory bodies***: Ensuring that Data Protection Authorities are empowered (legally, financially, technically) to enforce rights, investigate abuses, and hold both state and private actors to account;
- ***International cooperation that respects sovereignty:*** Global AI governance standards (e.g. at the UN, UNESCO, OECD) must incorporate requirements for informed consent that respect local conditions, indigenous rights, and collective consent. Also, funding and assistance should support Global South states to build legal and institutional capacity rather than impose top-down models; and
- ***Adopting Indigenous Data Sovereignty frameworks***: The CARE principles, or similar models, could provide alternative consent architecture, where communities co-design data governance processes, co-benefit from data usage, and define what "harm" or "benefit" means in their context.

242. So, the principle of informed consent is indispensable if AI governance is to respect human dignity, agency, and justice in the Global South. But legal texts or sophisticated policies alone are not sufficient. To give voice to those most affected by data-driven systems, consent must be made meaningful, contextual, enforceable, and flexible. It must acknowledge community, collective, indigenous, and national dimensions, not only the individual.

243. Through legal frameworks such as the AU Malabo Convention, and indigenous data sovereignty movements, there is evidence of both aspiration and progress. But much depends on implementation, capacity, cultural alignment, and resisting pressures, commercial, governmental, or technological, that seek to marginalise or bypass consent in favour of efficiency, control, or profit.

244. By re-committing to consent not just as a legal checkbox but as a mechanism of voice and power, actors in the Global South (working with global partners) could help re-balance the systems of AI governance in ways that are more just, equitable, and reflective of diverse human values. For many countries in the Global South, the debate over AI governance is inseparable from the struggle to define and enforce credible privacy data-protection standards.

245. Privacy rules do more than shield individuals: they allocate bargaining power over cross-border data flows, determine who could train AI on which datasets, and decide where accountability sits when harms occur. In practice, the jurisdictions that set workable, enforceable privacy baselines also gain agenda-setting influence in standards bodies and commercial negotiations.

246. Building and aligning robust privacy regimes is therefore a direct pathway for the Global South to shape AI governance, rather than merely adapting to it.

247. A visible example of regional standard-setting is Africa's evolving architecture. The African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (the *Malabo Convention*) that articulates core data-protection principles, lawfulness, purpose limitation, and informed, specific consent, and envisages independent supervisory authorities across member states. While ratification and implementation have been uneven, the convention remains a focal point for legal convergence and capacity-building.

248. The AU has complemented this treaty with a Data Policy Framework, designed to harmonise governance across a shared continental data context. It links privacy, security, and openness to development goals, and emphasises multi-stakeholder participation, interoperability, and human-rights safeguards, elements that matter directly for AI datasets, model evaluation, and cross-border processing. This framework gives African states a common vocabulary to negotiate with large platforms and external partners on issues such as model-training uses, dataset access, and localisation.

249. National regimes in the Global South have likewise matured, often drawing on but not duplicating the EU General Data Protection Regulation. The Brazil equivalent applies extraterritorially and empowers a national authority to sanction violations; recent enforcement, including a preventive order suspending Meta's use of Brazilians' personal data for generative AI training, signals an assertive posture on AI-related processing. In parallel, Brazil has moved to formalise standard contractual clauses for international transfers, tightening the compliance perimeter for companies training or deploying models with Brazilian data. Together, these moves translate privacy law into real AI governance leverage: they condition model training on lawful bases and constrain opaque data sourcing.

250. Southeast Asia is building its own connective tissue through ASEAN Model Contractual Clauses for cross-border transfers. While voluntary, these clauses provide a practical interoperability bridge, crucial for SMEs and regional platforms, and, when mapped against EU Standard Contractual Clauses, help reduce friction for companies routing data across multiple legal zones while keeping baseline protections intact.

For AI platforms in emerging markets, such interoperability is the difference between being included in collaborative research and being locked out by compliance costs.

251. These regional and national reforms do not operate in a vacuum. At the multilateral level, the UNESCO (UNESCO, 2021) Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, adopted by all 194 member states, anchors privacy and data governance within a broader human-rights frame, including transparency, fairness, and human oversight. Although non-binding, it gives Global South coalitions a normative foothold to argue that privacy is not a luxury cost on innovation but a precondition for trustworthy AI, one that must be resourced and respected in development finance, trade, and technical-assistance packages.

252. Still, gaps remain. Many data protection authorities face resource constraints that blunt enforcement; consent regimes could be undermined when access to essential services depends on data disclosure; and AI supply chains, especially model training on web-scraped content and shadow datasets, test the boundaries of legal compliance.

253. Addressing these gaps is not simply a domestic administrative task; it is a geopolitical one. When regulators demonstrate credible oversight, publishing guidance on AI training data, requiring transparency on dataset provenance, imposing proportionate fines, and cooperating across borders, they elevate the negotiating position of their jurisdictions in international standards fora and in bilateral agreements on digital trade.

254. The strategic opportunity for the Global South is therefore twofold. First, consolidate privacy as infrastructure: invest in independent regulators, adjudicatory capacity, and practical tools (model clauses, Data Protection Impact Assessment templates for AI training and deployment, certification schemes) that make rights real for citizens and feasible for firms. Second, align regionally for interoperability: use AU, ASEAN, and other blocs to agree on transfer mechanisms and accountability baselines that travel, so that AI research consortia, compute partnerships, and data collaboratives could operate lawfully without defaulting to external standards set elsewhere. Where possible, anchor these moves in global instruments (e.g., UNESCO (UNESCO, 2021)) to increase voice in UN-level AI processes.

255. As in the last decade, when privacy laws could spread by demonstration effects, it can be anticipated that enforcement and interoperability may, too. When Global South institutions could say, credibly, “these are our conditions for lawful data use in AI,” they do more than protect privacy. They shape markets, discipline data supply chains, and claim a substantive seat at the AI governance table.

256. Transparency in representation and reporting is one of the most persistent challenges in global AI governance, the asymmetry of voice, who is present at the table, whose experiences are documented, and whose perspectives shape the standards that define “responsible” or “ethical” AI.

257. Transparency in representation and reporting is critical to redressing this imbalance. Without it, the Global South risks being not only under-represented but mis-represented in the conversations that drive policy and technical standards worldwide.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

258. Representation begins with participation in the institutions that set global AI norms. Bodies such as the OECD, UNESCO (UNESCO, 2021), the UN AI Advisory Board, or multi-stakeholder standard-setting fora tend to be dominated by actors from the Global North. When Global South states are present, their interventions are not always systematically recorded, acknowledged, or integrated into outcomes. Transparency in how representation is structured, how delegates are chosen, how positions are consolidated, and how proceedings are reported, is vital. Without such transparency, the structural barriers of language, resources, and diplomatic weight tilt outcomes toward the priorities of wealthier nations and corporations.

259. Transparency is also essential in how AI governance frameworks themselves are reported back to national contexts. Global agreements often use abstract, technical language that obscures what is at stake for ordinary citizens in Nairobi, New Delhi, or São Paulo. Clear reporting on the implications of global norms for local realities, such as data sovereignty , labour rights in AI value chains, or community consent over data use, enables citizens, civil society, and local policymakers to hold their governments and international institutions accountable. This is particularly important where AI systems intersect with sensitive domains such as social welfare, healthcare, or surveillance, where opaque reporting risks normalising practices that erode rights without scrutiny.

260. For the Global South, transparency in representation must also mean more than counting seats at the table. It requires mechanisms to ensure that diverse voices within countries, civil society organisations, technical experts, grassroots communities, indigenous peoples, are consulted and reflected in official positions. Otherwise, “representation” risks being tokenistic, dominated by elites who may not carry the lived concerns of marginalised groups most affected by AI-driven decisions. Transparent reporting on how positions are formed, which constituencies were engaged, and what dissenting views exist could strengthen legitimacy and ensure that Global South voices are not just present but plural.

261. A further consideration is the transparency of corporate and multilateral reporting. Many of the largest AI companies operate across borders, sourcing data and labour from the Global South. Yet reporting on how these activities affect local populations, be it in terms of dataset provenance, the conditions of data annotators, or the impacts of AI deployments on jobs and governance, is often opaque. Demanding transparent disclosure of these impacts and building reporting standards that account for global supply chains, offers another avenue through which Global South actors could shape global debates.

262. Finally, transparency is about narrative framing. Reports and global strategies too often describe the Global South only as a site of risk, experimentation, or “catch-up” capacity building, rather than as a source of innovation, ethical leadership, and norm entrepreneurship.

263. Changing this requires conscious attention to how the stories of AI governance are told, who is quoted, whose experiments are highlighted, and whose innovations are celebrated. Transparency in acknowledging contributions from the Global South could shift the epistemic balance of global AI governance , making it less hierarchical and more plural.

264. So, transparency in representation and reporting is not a procedural afterthought; it is a substantive mechanism for justice. For the Global South, demanding greater clarity in who represents whom, how debates are documented, and how impacts are disclosed could amplify voice, correct misrepresentation, and assert agency. It offers a pathway to ensure that global AI governance is not written about them, but with them, in ways that reflect their realities, values, and aspirations.

265. Equity in participation and attribution is a central challenge in global AI governance . While the rhetoric of "inclusive dialogue" has become common, the practical reality often falls short: participation from the Global South is limited, and attribution of contributions is frequently obscured or sidelined. These inequities mean that the voices of countries and communities most affected by AI are often absent from decision making or acknowledged only superficially, even when they bring forward valuable insights, practices, or innovations.

266. Participation is not merely about being present in global fora. True equity requires that Global South representatives have the resources, expertise, and platforms to shape agendas rather than respond to them. At present, participation is skewed by structural disadvantages, financial barriers to attending international meetings, limited capacity in underfunded ministries, and linguistic or technical obstacles that marginalise smaller delegations. As a result, decision making on standards and norms is dominated by wealthier countries and corporations with the ability to fund sustained, expert engagement. Without addressing these barriers, participation remains formally open but substantively unequal.

267. Attribution is equally significant. When Global South actors do participate, their contributions are often diluted in final reports, absorbed into collective statements, or attributed to international organisations rather than to the original voices that raised them. This risks erasing the intellectual and political labour of Southern actors and perpetuates a hierarchy where knowledge and leadership are recognised primarily when articulated by institutions of the Global North. The effect is double: the South loses recognition as a site of norm entrepreneurship, and the global governance ecosystem is deprived of a more accurate accounting of where ideas and practices originate.

268. The inequity of attribution is not abstract; it plays out in real contexts. For example, innovative experiments in community-level data governance, indigenous data sovereignty , or participatory technology design often emerge in the Global South, yet they are cited internationally without acknowledging their origins. Similarly, when African, Asian, or Latin American regulators set precedents in data protection or algorithmic accountability, their work may be referenced indirectly yet rarely credited as shaping global standards. This erasure weakens the ability of the South to claim legitimacy and bargaining power in future negotiations.

269. Correcting these inequities requires a more expansive vision of what participation and attribution mean. Participation must be supported with resources: funding to enable sustained delegations, translation and interpretation services to overcome linguistic barriers, and capacity-building initiatives that equip Global South policymakers and civil society to engage on equal terms.

270. Attribution must be transparent and deliberate: reports, communiqués, and global strategies should explicitly recognise contributions from Southern actors, naming the countries, institutions, or communities that originate ideas or practices. Such recognition not only affirms equity but also helps shift the narrative from one in which the South is a passive recipient of governance norms to one in which it is an active co-creator.

271. Equity in participation and attribution also depends on pluralism within the Global South itself. States must ensure that their delegations and positions reflect input from civil society, academia, indigenous communities, and local innovators, rather than only from central governments or elites. Likewise, attribution should acknowledge grassroots and community-level contributions, not just official representatives. By broadening both participation and credit, the Global South could present itself not as a monolith but as a diverse, dynamic set of voices shaping AI governance .

272. Ultimately, equity in participation and attribution is about more than fairness, it is about legitimacy. Global AI governance will lack credibility if it excludes or erases the perspectives of those whose populations will live with its consequences. Ensuring that the Global South participates on equal terms, and that its contributions are attributed with respect and accuracy, strengthens both the justice and the effectiveness of AI governance. It signals that the future of AI is not being written by a few, for the many, but through a shared process that values the voices and innovations of all.

4.8 Indicators

273. Measuring diversity of voices from the Global South in AI governance requires metrics that go beyond headcounts, to capture participation quality, influence, and recognition. Potential metrics, grouped into broad categories, which could be used to explore or quantify this dimension include:

Representation Metrics

- ***Geographic distribution:*** Number and proportion of Global South countries represented in major AI governance fora (e.g., UN AI Advisory Body, UNESCO, OECD AI Observatory, G20;
- ***Regional balance:*** Degree to which Africa, Latin America , South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East are each represented, rather than over-representing one sub-region; and
- **Delegation size**: Average number of delegates per Global South country compared to Global North peers.

Participation Quality Metrics

- ***Speaking time/intervention count****:* Frequency and duration of interventions made by Global South representatives in international meetings;
- ***Agenda-setting influence****:* Proportion of meeting agendas, resolutions, or working groups initiated or co-chaired by Global South actors; and
- ***Policy text adoption****:* Number of policy proposals, draft language, or principles originating in the Global South that are incorporated into final communiqués or governance frameworks.

Attribution and Recognition Metrics

- ***Citation tracking:*** Frequency with which Global South initiatives (laws, frameworks, academic research, indigenous governance models) are cited in international reports, declarations, or AI ethics (Birhane, A., 2021; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014) guidelines;
- ***Named acknowledgment:*** Presence of explicit attribution to Global South institutions, governments, or communities in official documentation; and
- ***Leadership roles:*** Count of Global South representatives serving as chairs, rapporteurs, or authors of key AI governance outputs.

Inclusivity within the Global South

- ***Stakeholder diversity****:* Proportion of Global South participants from government, civil society, academia, technical communities, private sector, and indigenous/grassroots groups;
- ***Gender and youth representation****:* Balance of gender and age demographics within Global South delegations; and
- ***Local consultation mechanisms****:* Evidence that national or regional delegations consulted with domestic stakeholders before contributing positions internationally.

Capacity and Resourcing Metrics

- ***Funding access:*** Availability of financial support for Global South delegates to attend global AI governance events;
- **Training and technical assistance**: Number of Global South participants benefiting from governance training programmes or fellowship schemes; and
- **Continuity of participation**: Extent to which the same Global South countries or actors participate consistently across multiple governance cycles, rather than sporadically.

274. Individually, these metrics provide snapshots; collectively, they could form an index of "Global South Voice in AI Governance ". Such an index could reveal not only whether voices are numerically present, but whether they are meaningfully engaged, recognised, and resourced. Over time, tracking these indicators could show progress, stagnation, or regression in equity and inclusivity.

275. Critical to the above is a set of metrics to explore or quantify the quality and depth of insights gathered from the Global South in terms of AI governance. Shifting from representation to the quality and depth of insights is crucial because Global South contributions should not be measured only by presence, but also by the substance they bring into AI governance .

276. A set of metrics that could help explore or quantify this dimension include:

Substantive Influence on Policy Outputs

- ***Adoption rate****:* The proportion of Global South-originated proposals, case studies, or draft clauses that are reflected in final governance texts, recommendations, or treaties;

- ***Framing power:*** Evidence that Global South contributions shape the framing of debates (e.g., introducing terms such as "data colonialism" "digital sovereignty," or "community consent" into official language; and
- ***Policy originality:*** Number of unique concepts or governance models (e.g., data trusts, indigenous data sovereignty frameworks, South–South cooperation models) introduced into global fora.

Relevance and Contextual Grounding

- ***Context-specific case inclusion:*** Frequency of Global South examples (laws, community projects, regulatory experiments) cited in global AI governance reports or briefings;
- ***Problem-setting alignment:*** Degree to which Global South inputs highlight issues underrepresented in Northern discourse (such as informal labour impacts, linguistic diversity, or rural AI deployment; and
- ***Development linkage:*** Presence of contributions that connect AI governance to SDGs, public service delivery, or local economic justice.

Breadth of Knowledge Sources

- ***Diversity of voices within contributions****:* Evidence that Global South submissions draw on civil society, academia, technical experts, indigenous knowledge holders, and not just state actors; and
- ***Interdisciplinarity****:* Extent to which insights integrate legal, social, cultural, and technical perspectives, rather than focusing narrowly on compliance or economic opportunity.

Recognition and Uptake of Insights

- ***Citation metrics****:* How often Global South-authored research, reports, or policy briefs are cited in international governance documents;
- ***Leadership attribution****:* Whether Global South experts are invited to serve as rapporteurs, lead drafters, or thematic chairs, indicating recognition of their depth of expertise; and
- ***Replication****:* Instances where models or practices first trialled in the Global South are later adopted or adapted internationally.

Sustainability of Contributions

- ***Continuity****:* Whether Global South insights evolve across multiple fora, showing sustained engagement and deepening positions rather than one-off interventions;
- ***Feedback loops****:* Evidence that global institutions provide formal responses to Global South inputs (e.g., via acknowledgments, follow-up questions, or incorporation into next drafts; and
- ***Capacity-building outcomes****:* Whether participation in governance leads to new research networks, knowledge hubs, or technical standards in the Global South.

277. Taken together, these metrics could help assess not only whether Global South actors are "present" but whether their insights meaningfully shape the governance landscape: Are they framing the debates? Are their local realities feeding into global principles? Are their innovations being recognised, credited, and replicated?

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

278. The following metrics could assess the practical relevance of Global South contributions to ongoing global debates in AI governance . These go beyond measuring voice or quality alone, and instead ask: Do Global South insights matter for live policy questions shaping AI worldwide?

Alignment with Global Agenda Themes

- ***Topical resonance:*** Extent to which Global South contributions address the same pressing issues on global agendas (e.g., generative AI safety, cross-border data flows, AI in elections, algorithmic bias; and
- ***Timeliness:*** Frequency with which Global South insights are offered while debates are unfolding, rather than after global standards are already settled.

Problem-Solving Orientation

- ***Policy applicability:*** Number of contributions that include actionable recommendations, draft clauses, or model policies usable in negotiations or domestic lawmaking;
- ***Scalability:*** Evidence that Global South practices (e.g., data protection enforcement, participatory governance models) could be adapted beyond local contexts to inform regional or global solutions; and
- ***Comparative framing:*** Instances where Global South actors explicitly compare their experiences with Global North examples, offering lessons transferable across contexts.

Engagement in Active Fora

- ***Agenda uptake:*** Whether Global South proposals are placed on the agenda of major governance fora (e.g., UN AI Advisory Body, G20, OECD AI Observatory;
- ***Negotiation traction*****:** Proportion of Global South positions that enter into draft negotiation texts or working group recommendations; and
- ***Coalition-building:*** Evidence that other states (North or South) endorse, co-sponsor, or cite Global South positions during deliberations.

Reference and Integration in Global Reports

- ***Inclusion in key outputs:*** How often Global South case studies, regulatory frameworks, or ethical models are referenced in flagship documents (e.g., UNESCO Report (UNESCO, 2021) AI Ethics (Birhane, A., 2021; de Sousa Santos, B., 2014), UN Tech Envoy briefings, OECD AI Principles reviews; and
- ***Policy diffusion:*** Number of instances where specific Global South approaches are explicitly recommended for adoption or further study by multilateral organisations.

Practical Impact on Cross-Border Governance

- ***Trade and digital agreements:*** Whether Global South privacy, data-sharing, or AI accountability provisions appear in trade pacts or digital economy agreements;
- ***Regulatory inspiration:*** Documented cases where Global North or multilateral institutions borrow directly from Global South frameworks (e.g., the Brazil General Data Protection Law influencing EU discussions on AI data rights; and
- ***Capacity transfer:*** Initiatives where Global South-led models or pilot projects form the basis for global capacity-building or technical assistance programmes.

279. These indicators together show whether Global South contributions are not just "heard" but operationalised in global AI governance. Practical relevance is demonstrated when Global South insights enter mainstream debates in real time, provide real, tangible and transferable policy tools, gain traction through adoption, citation, or coalition support, and influence how rules are written and implemented across borders.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 Regional Comparative Analysis

280. Across the Global South, AI governance debates tend to start from three linked imperatives: (1) protect dignity and rights in contexts with uneven rule of law; (2) turn AI into tangible development gains (jobs, productivity, service delivery; and (3) re-balance data and compute power that currently sits with a small number of firms and jurisdictions. The practical question underneath is not "AI: yes or no?" but rather "under what terms, whose standards, and with what capacity and bargaining power?"

Sub-Saharan Africa

281. African policy conversations are unusually explicit about state capacity and infrastructure as governance pre-conditions. Typical comments include a need for:

- ***Public interest compute and datasets*** (e.g., language data for low- resource African languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021) to avoid dependency on foreign application programming interfaces;
- ***Rights-by-design framing:*** algorithmic discrimination, biometric surveillance , and political manipulation are forefront because electoral integrity and social cohesion are fragile in many places; and
- ***Regulatory gradualism:*** sandboxes and sector pilots (health, agriculture, public finance) rather than blanket rules, paired with procurement standards to shape markets.

282. Of course, there is a trade-off between the appetite of governments for surveillance tech versus civil society push for proportionality and independent oversight; and the risk that strict data localisation, without capacity, ends up entrenching weak data stewardship.

North Africa and the Middle East

283. In this region, two tracks run in parallel. Gulf states emphasise state-led AI industrial policy, national strategies, sovereign investment, and standards participation, to diversify economies. Elsewhere, fiscal pressure and governance constraints make use-case pragmatism dominant (digital government, energy, logistics). Whilst civil society focuses on speech, privacy, and biometric controls, especially where civic space is limited.

284. Key divergence within the region does exist: some governments seek centralised data platforms and permissive testing regimes to speed deployment, while rights groups call for prior human-rights impact assessments and bright-line bans (e.g., on emotion recognition, mass face recognition).

South Asia

285. South Asian voices tend to resonate on labour and services: call centres, annotation, IT services, and creative industries are exposed to automation and value-chain squeeze with a focus on:

- ***Fair work standards*** in data supply chains (pay, attribution, consent;
- ***Platform bargaining*** and revenue-sharing for training on local content; and

- ***Model safety for constrained contexts:*** "good enough" models used in public service delivery demand guardrails against hallucinations, linguistic bias, and caste/gender harms.

286. The regulatory landscape varies: smaller Asian neighbours lean on adapted global principles plus donor-backed capacity building. ASEAN policy circles emphasise interoperability, keeping data and services flowing while preventing harm. This then requires risk-based, sectoral rules tuned to micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises, tourism, logistics, and fintech; cross-border data transfer mechanisms that do not replicate EU-style adequacy though still require security and purpose limitation; and content governance that balances dis-information controls with economic openness.

287. The region tends to be split between investment-forward models (welcoming AI data centres, cloud, talent) and caution around platform power and speech, especially during elections. Multi-lingualism (Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.) drives interest in public funding for local programming.

Latin America and the Caribbean

288. The region leads with a distinctive rights-first legalism, strong data protection traditions, constitutional courts, and indigenous rights, paired with industrial and cultural policy. This reflected in a drive for algorithmic transparency, explainability, and due process, especially in social benefits, policing, and credit. It also requires collective rights over data (indigenous data sovereignty; cultural works used for training) and open government and civic tech communities pushing procurement rules, auditability, and public registers of automated decision systems.

289. Macro constraints such as debt and inflation make regional cooperation appealing (shared guidance, open datasets, standards participation), but capacity gaps in enforcement remain a recurring concern.

Small Island and Pacific states

290. Because of their precarious nature, Pacific and Caribbean states frame AI through climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and service delivery at tiny scale.

291. So, their priorities include: sovereign control of sensitive geospatial and cultural data, resilience by design (offline-capable systems, clear liability for failure during disasters) and shared services (regional data/compute hubs) to avoid vendor lock-in. their need is clear a guaranteed voice in standards and funding, not just downstream adoption.

292. There are some cross-cutting themes where the South converges such as Data and model sovereignty (without isolationism). There is an interest in local or regional copies of critical models/datasets; support for open-source models, paired with interoperable, cross-border rules to keep trade and research alive.

293. Many argue that shaping what governments public procurement (security, audit logs, documentation, local language performance) is the fastest way to bend markets.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

294. Where institutions are weak, requirements are for human-in-the-loop, appeals, and impact assessments to be prioritised in high-stakes public services. A recurring complaint is the practical barrier to global meetings (visas, fees, English-only drafts). Solutions proposed: reserved seats, funded fellowships, multi-lingual drafting.

295. There are also instances where perspectives diverge such as localisation versus openness. Some advocate strong localisation for leverage and rights; others fear "balkanisation" that raises costs and dampens start-ups. Also to be considered are centralised state strategies versus plural, multi-stakeholder governance whereby faster execution may compromise risks to rights and innovation. Many prefer adaptable principles due to capacity limits, though communities harmed by AI demand hard obligations and penalties.

296. A central tension in shaping AI governance for the Global South lies in balancing immediate economic capture with long-term ecosystem building. On one hand, governments may seek to attract hyperscale investment quickly to stimulate growth, yet lasting benefits depend on nurturing local talent, compute resources, and intellectual property over time. The challenge is to design governance mechanisms that secure near-term gains without sacrificing the foundations of local innovation and sovereignty.

297. Practical governance approaches for the Global South could take the form of tiered, risk-based obligations. High-risk applications, particularly in areas such as public services, employment, finance, and security, would require stronger oversight, while low-risk, pro-development use cases would face lighter reporting requirements. This ensures that innovation is duly stifled, while safeguarding communities from harmful deployments.

298. One effective safeguard is the requirement for pre-deployment impact assessments that address context-specific risks. These would capture issues such as language bias es, impacts on protected characteristics, and political sensitivities. Summaries of these assessments, written in accessible language, could be published to enhance transparency and accountability.

299. To operationalise accountability, countries and regions could develop independent audit capacity hosted in universities and regional laboratories. With pooled funding, these institutions would provide credible oversight without over-reliance on industry self-assessment. Complementing this, model cards and data statements could be made standard procurement requirements, ensuring that any system deployed meets benchmarks for local-language performance and provides transparency on training data.

300. Equity also demands data justice mechanisms. Communities and creators contributing data should have access to consent and compensation pathways, while specific protections must exist for indigenous and culturally sensitive data.

301. Alongside this, compute access programmes, including regional credit pools and shared datasets, would expand opportunities for start-ups, researchers, and civil society to participate meaningfully in AI development.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

302. Finally, governance must extend beyond domestic policy. The Global South should have a reserved voice in global fora. Guaranteed representation in standards-setting bodies and treaty negotiations, paired with translation and travel support, ensures that perspectives from diverse contexts are heard and embedded in international frameworks. Taken together, these measures move beyond abstract principles. They offer real, practical steps that empower the Global South to shape AI governance in ways that both protect local communities and foster sustainable innovation.

303. Global South voices do not reject AI; they reject governance that arrives as fait accompli. The essential element is contextual agency: building the capacity to set priorities, constrain harms, and capture value at home. Effective AI governance partnerships will therefore treat the South not merely as an implementer of imported rules, but as a co-author, one that brings lived experience with weak institutions, multi-lingual societies, and fast-changing political economies. Designing for that reality, through procurement, standards access, capacity funding, and enforceable rights, is what turns "inclusion" from language in a communiqué into actual power.

5.2 Emerging Trends

304. A clear trend is the move away from being passive recipients of AI principles drafted in the Global North. Governments, regional blocs, and civil society actors are asserting that AI governance must not be transplanted wholesale. Instead, they seek co-authorship of global rules and space to adapt frameworks to local contexts. This reflects a growing recognition that one-size-fits-all regulation overlooks cultural, linguistic, and institutional realities.

305. While Global North debates often emphasise existential risk or competitive advantage, Global South narratives are grounded in developmental utility. AI is seen as a tool to improve public service delivery (health, agriculture, education, disaster risk management; enhance economic productivity and job creation; and expand financial and digital inclusion. Governance is therefore emerging less as a "brake" on innovation and more as a steering mechanism, ensuring AI systems deliver tangible benefits without deepening inequalities.

306. There is a shift from simply demanding "privacy" protections to articulating data sovereignty, control over how national and community data are collected, stored, and used. Linked to this is the growing idea of collective rights: indigenous data sovereignty in Latin America, African calls for shared language datasets, and Pacific demands for stewardship of geospatial and cultural data.

307. Governance frameworks are increasingly tied to who owns and benefits from data, not just how it is protected. Governments and research communities are investing in localisation; local language models, regional datasets, and open-source approaches.

308. This trend arises from frustration with the dominance of English-centric, Western-trained models that misrepresent or marginalise Global South contexts. Alongside localisation, there is a demand for fair attribution and compensation for the use of Southern content in model training.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

309. Instead of adopting comprehensive "AI Acts," many Global South countries are moving toward risk-based, sector-specific regulation. Pilot sandboxes in health, agriculture, and financial services allow for gradual, adaptive governance. This approach reflects both capacity constraints and the need to prioritise high-stakes applications where harms are most acute.

310. A notable trend is leveraging government purchasing power. By embedding requirements for transparency, local language performance, human oversight, and auditability in procurement contracts, states could influence how AI systems are built and deployed, even when domestic enforcement capacity is limited.

311. There is a visible turn toward regional governance mechanisms, from the African Union continental AI strategy to ASEAN data frameworks and Mercosur discussions. Regional platforms are seen as ways to pool expertise, negotiate with large firms on more equal terms, and avoid regulatory fragmentation that could harm trade and innovation.

312. Civil society movements in the Global South are increasingly vocal against unchecked biometric surveillance , predictive policing, and disinformation manipulation. These issues are particularly acute in contexts where democratic institutions are fragile. Emerging governance narratives therefore include calls for bright-line bans on certain AI uses (e.g., emotion recognition, mass facial surveillance) and for human rights impact assessments before deployment.

313. A persistent trend is the demand for equitable representation in global AI governance fora (ISO, OECD, UN processes). Barriers such as cost, visas, and English-only drafting are being reframed as structural exclusions. The call is not merely for "consultation" but for structural guarantees of Southern voice and vote in rule-making.

314. Perhaps the most practical trend is the recognition that governance cannot be divorced from capacity. Many Global South voices argue that building technical expertise, independent audit labs, compute access, and policy literacy is itself a governance imperative. Without this, even well-drafted rules remain aspirational.

315. Emerging trends in Global South perspectives signal a transition: from adoption of external standards to active agenda setting. AI governance here is being tied explicitly to questions of development, sovereignty, equity, and representation. The Global South is not calling for a lighter version of Northern rules but for a different paradigm, one that sees AI governance as a means of securing developmental benefits, protecting communities, and reshaping global power relations in the digital era.

5.3 Challenges and Controversies

316. AI governance in the Global South sits at the intersection of aspiration and vulnerability. Countries and communities are eager to capture the AI developmental potential, yet they face structural barriers and ethical dilemmas that complicate how governance should unfold. The conversation is not only about "what rules are needed" but also about who gets to set them, whose interests they serve, and how power is distributed.

Key Challenges

317. Regulatory agencies often lack the expertise, resources, and infrastructure to meaningfully oversee AI systems. This creates a risk of "paper governance", rules on the books without enforcement capacity, and leaves many states dependent on external consultants, donor-driven models, or standards set elsewhere.

318. Most compute power, cloud services, and advanced model development are concentrated in a handful of Northern firms. Global South countries are positioned as downstream users, data suppliers, or annotation workforces, reinforcing digital dependency . This undermines local bargaining power and fuels calls for greater sovereignty over data and infrastructure.

319. Some states experiment with sandboxes and sectoral rules, while others remain without any formal governance. The result is a patchwork of frameworks, ranging from ambitious strategies to regulatory silence, which complicates cross-border collaboration and creates uncertainty for local innovators.

320. In fragile democracies or authoritarian contexts, AI systems are frequently deployed for surveillance, predictive policing, and disinformation management. Civil society raises alarms over misuse, but limited political space makes it hard to push for robust rights-based safeguards.

321. Global rule-making (ISO, OECD, G7, UN) remains dominated by Northern states and corporations. Global South participation is often tokenistic or consultative, constrained by cost, visa restrictions, or language barriers. This fuels frustration that governance is being set without those most affected having a real seat at the table.

Controversies

322. A core controversy is whether to mandate data localisation, sovereign cloud, and national compute infrastructure as a way to gain control. Proponents argue this builds sovereignty; critics warn it risks digital isolation, stifling start-ups and innovation in smaller markets. Governments often prioritise AI as an engine of economic growth and national competitiveness. Civil society, however, pushes back, emphasising that economic modernisation should not come at the cost of privacy, due process, or free expression. The tension between state-led industrial policy and rights-based governance is particularly sharp in parts of Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East.

323. Security agencies frame surveillance technologies as necessary for crime prevention, counter terrorism, and social order. Civil society highlights the risks of abuse, discrimination, and chilling effects on political participation. This clash represents a fundamental controversy about whether AI should entrench state power or be constrained by rights guarantees.

324. Should Global South countries align with frameworks such as the EU AI Act or OECD principles, or design context-specific approaches? Alignment could ease trade and interoperability but risks regulatory overreach in contexts with limited capacity. A debate is emerging over whether harmonisation is empowering or another form of dependency .

325. Open-source AI is celebrated as a way to democratise access, especially for low-resource languages and local applications. Yet there are controversies about security risks, accountability, and economic capture: will open models empower local innovation, or leave the South even more exposed to unregulated harms?

326. There is growing controversy over how "inclusion" is operationalised. Invitations to participate in consultations are different from co-decision making power. Many argue that without structural guarantees, funded seats, multi-lingual drafting, equal voting rights, "inclusion" risks becoming symbolic rather than substantive.

327. The Global South's AI governance journey is marked by deep challenges and sharp controversies. The challenges, capacity deficits, dependency , fragmented rules, and weak protections, create real risks of marginalisation. The controversies between openness and sovereignty, growth and rights, surveillance and safety, harmonisation and contextualism reflect unresolved tensions about what AI governance should prioritise. At stake is not only how AI is used in the South, but whether the South is treated as a rule-taker or as a co-author of the digital future.

5.4 Issues and Solutions

328. Across the Global South, conversations about AI governance are shaped by two parallel realities: the desire to harness AI for development, inclusion, and resilience, and the risks of dependency, exploitation, and harm if governance is weak or externally imposed. Voices from governments, civil society, academia, and industry are converging on a set of key issues and pointing toward solutions that reflect local contexts and aspirations.

Key Issues

329. Many states lack trained regulators, independent audit bodies, or technical infrastructure. This makes it difficult to translate global principles into enforceable, context-sensitive rules. Much of the Global South functions as a data provider for systems trained and monetised elsewhere. Communities often see their cultural, linguistic, or indigenous data used without consent or benefit-sharing.

330. Standards and treaties are mostly shaped by actors in the Global North, with Global South stakeholders often relegated to consultative roles rather than decision-making power. AI is already being applied in high-stakes sectors, welfare, policing, border control, education, without sufficient oversight. The risks of bias , exclusion, and surveillance abuse are amplified in contexts with fragile institutions and limited avenues for redress. AI ecosystems in the South are often dependent on foreign platforms, proprietary models, and cloud infrastructure. This raises concerns about long-term sovereignty, bargaining power, and the possibility of being locked into unequal economic relationships.

331. Without coordination, the South risks fragmented governance: some countries adopting stringent frameworks, others having none, which could both hinder innovation and weaken protections.

Emerging Solutions

332. Instead of mirroring sweeping Northern AI laws, many Global South actors are pursuing risk-based, sector-specific rules, targeting healthcare, education, finance, or agriculture, while leaving space for innovation in lower-risk domains. Governments are embedding governance requirements into procurement contracts: demanding transparency, explainability, human oversight, and local language performance in the systems they purchase. This creates *de facto* standards even when enforcement capacity is weak.

333. Regional bodies (African Union, ASEAN, Mercosur, CARICOM, Pacific Islands Forum) are beginning to coordinate AI principles, pool expertise, and develop shared data and compute resources. This reduces fragmentation and amplifies bargaining power in global fora.

334. Communities are advancing models of collective data rights: indigenous data sovereignty in Latin America, community-driven data trusts in Africa, and cultural heritage protections in the Pacific. These seek to ensure that benefits from data use flow back to the communities that generate it.

335. Civil society and governments are emphasising that capacity is part of governance. This includes training regulators, funding independent audit labs, supporting open-source model development, and ensuring universities and civil society have access to compute. Rights advocates are pushing for clear bans on certain AI applications, such as mass facial recognition, predictive policing, or emotion recognition, and requiring human rights impact assessments before deployment of high-risk systems.

336. Solutions go beyond "consultation" toward structural guarantees of participation: funded seats for Southern delegates, multi-lingual drafting processes, and voting parity in standards-setting bodies. Investments in local language models, regional datasets, and open-source tools are seen as critical to reducing dependency and ensuring cultural and linguistic inclusion. These efforts not only protect against bias but also empower local innovation.

337. So, the key issues in Global South AI governance, capacity gaps, dependency , weak protections, and unequal voice, are being met with a growing set of solutions rooted in sovereignty, justice, and pragmatism. The emphasis is on contextual governance: rules and practices that reflect developmental priorities, safeguard rights, and ensure that benefits are shared fairly. Rather than being passive recipients of global norms, Global South actors are beginning to redefine governance itself, from a compliance exercise to a tool for shaping power, protecting communities, and steering technology toward equitable futures.

338. It is instructive to look at this regionally.

Sub-Saharan Africa

339. The key issues are capacity gaps in regulation, testing, and audit; limited local compute and language resources; risk of rights harms (biometrics, voter manipulation) amid fragile institutions; dependence on foreign clouds, models, and vendors; and fragmented national approaches that complicate cross-border services.

340. Potential solutions include: risk-based, sector pilots in health, ag, fintech; regulatory sandboxes tied to public outcomes; procurement as leverage: documentation, audit logs, local-language performance, and human-in-the-loop as contract terms; regional coordination (continental principles, shared benchmarks) and pooled infrastructure (regional data/compute hubs; open/local language ecosystems: public funding for low-resource African languages (Joshi, P. *et al*., 2020; Munyua, A., 2021; bright-line safeguards on mass biometric surveillance (Amnesty International, 2021; (Hao, K., 2021; West, S.M. *et al*., 2019; and human rights impact assessment for public deployments.

North Africa and Middle East

341. In this region, the key issues include: tension between state-led AI industrial policy and rights protections; centralised data platforms versus independent oversight; limited civic space in some contexts; skills shortages outside leading hubs; and uneven adoption across the region.

342. Potential solutions could include: sectoral rules for government, energy, logistics; phased compliance for small and medium sized enterprises; independent impact assessments (where possible), plus ombudsman/appeal routes for high-stakes uses, sovereign capability with interoperability: national clouds that still enable cross-border data transfers with safeguards; and public–academic audit labs to test bias, safety, and security.

South Asia

343. In this region, the key issues include: exposure of services and creative sectors to automation and value-chain squeeze; use of AI in welfare targeting, policing, and content moderation with uneven safeguards; and highly multi-lingual societies underserved by general-purpose models.

344. Potential solutions could include: fair work/data supply-chain standards (pay, consent, attribution) for labelling/creative data; platform bargaining and benefit-sharing when local content trains global models; funding for indigenous language models, benchmark suites; safety evals tuned to caste/gender/linguistic harms; and targeted regulation of high-risk deployments (welfare, credit, employment) with auditability and appeal.

Southeast Asia

345. Referring specifically to ASEAN countries the key issues include: keeping trade and data flows open while mitigating disinformation, fraud, and safety risks; micro, small and medium enterprises-heavy economies sensitive to compliance burdens; and election-period information integrity challenges.

346. Potential solutions could include: interoperable, risk-based frameworks aligned with regional data transfer mechanisms (contractual/technical safeguards over adequacy clones; procurement standards for documentation, incident reporting, and local-language performance; content governance that pairs platform transparency with due-process protections; and capacity programmes for small and medium enterprises (templates, model cards, shared testing tools).

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Latin America and the Caribbean

347. In this region, the key issues include: strong rights traditions with uneven enforcement capacity; algorithmic harms in social benefits, policing, and credit scoring; and cultural/indigenous data used without consent or benefit.

348. Potential solutions could include: due-process-centric rules: explanation rights, notification, contestation, and public registries of automated systems; collective/indigenous data governance (free, prior, informed consent), data trusts, and cultural heritage protections; open government tooling for audits, datasets, and transparency portals; and regional guidance and shared laboratories to reduce duplication and improve enforcement.

Small Island and Pacific States

349. In this region, the key issues include: tiny scale, limited budgets, and acute climate/disaster risks; dependency on external vendors; risk of lock-in; and sensitivity of geospatial and cultural data.

350. Potential solutions could include: resilience-by-design requirements (offline modes, clear liability during disasters, fail-safe defaults; regional shared services (compute credits, security reviews, legal templates; data sovereignty for cultural and environmental data; controlled research access with community oversight; and vendor neutrality clauses to prevent lock-in and ensure data portability.

351. Also, could be included are cross-regional solutions for health, welfare, employment, finance, security which would require human rights assessment, human oversight, appeals, and logging. Procurement could call for, demand model/data sheets, local-language metrics, red-team results, incident reporting, and audit rights; regional audit labs, evaluation benchmarks, and pooled compute/datasets accessible to regulators, universities, and civil society. There would need to be a guaranteed voice internationally: funded seats, multi-lingual drafts, and voting parity in standards/treaty processes; supported by local open-source and local language models, public interest datasets, and grants for safety research rooted in local harms.

6 CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

352. This review has shown that the "voice" of the Global South in AI governance is not absent but is too often marginalised, fragmented, or filtered through Global North structures. Across regions, there is a shared emphasis on sovereignty, justice, and development, alongside concerns about dependency, exclusion, and technological colonialism. Yet each region brings distinct priorities: Africa stresses resisting digital extractivism while building capacity; South and Southeast Asia highlight inequality, linguistic diversity, and platform power; Latin America ties AI debates to democracy, rights, and transparency; the Pacific frames AI within existential concerns about climate resilience and cultural preservation.

353. Despite diversity, common threads run across contexts: the risks of job displacement and digital labour exploitation; the need for data sovereignty and equitable participation in global governance; and the opportunities for AI to serve pressing development goals if designed with contextual sensitivity. The literature underscores that AI governance in the Global South cannot simply be about adoption or compliance with Northern norms. Instead, it must be about agency, co-creation, and embedding plural values in global frameworks.

354. The review also highlights structural constraints: lack of resources and infrastructure, weak regulatory capacity, dominance of external vendors, and limited seats at global governance tables. Without deliberate pathways to inclusion, the Global South risks being locked into a two-tier system, consumers of AI rather than co-authors of its rules and benefits.

6.2 Recommendations

355. Addressing the challenges of fragmented governance, inequitable access, and underrepresentation of Global South voices requires a deliberate and collaborative approach. To realise a more inclusive AI governance landscape, the following are proposed.

356. Regional cooperation should be strengthened. Regional alliances provide a powerful platform for shared bargaining power, resource pooling, and collective knowledge-building. Supporting regional AI strategies, such as those developed by the African Union, ASEAN, CARICOM, and Pacific networks, will allow countries to negotiate as blocs, reduce duplication of efforts, and establish sustainable capacity. Initiatives like regional audit labs, benchmark suites, and shared compute infrastructure could further promote South–South learning and foster resilience.

357. Equitable AI governance hinges on fair access to and control over data. This requires promoting context-sensitive data localisation laws where appropriate, while also enabling interoperable regional frameworks for responsible data sharing. Collective governance mechanisms, including community data trusts and indigenous data sovereignty models, should be developed to protect the rights of local communities and ensure that data is managed as a shared resource.

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

358. AI governance must be rooted in principles of justice, fairness, and human dignity. Governments and institutions should mandate human rights and ethical impact assessments for high-risk AI applications, especially in sensitive domains such as welfare provision, policing, and credit scoring. Governance processes should be participatory and inclusive, actively involving civil society, grassroots organisations, and marginalised communities to ensure that diverse perspectives are not only heard but meaningfully integrated.

359. Public procurement is a key lever for shaping responsible AI markets. Governments could demand transparency (through model cards and dataset documentation), accountability (via audit rights and appeal mechanisms), and inclusivity (with benchmarks in local languages from AI vendors. While aligning with global standards such as the UNESCO AI Ethics Recommendations, adaptation is critical so that guidelines reflect regional realities and cultural contexts.

360. Inclusive AI governance requires nurturing domestic innovation. Investment should be directed towards local start-ups, open-source initiatives, and multi-lingual natural language processing research to expand representation across diverse contexts. Incentives could encourage the development of AI applications that augment labour and align with sustainable development priorities, rather than exacerbate inequities or displace livelihoods.

361. The voices of Global South actors must be fully represented in global governance fora, including the UN, G20, OECD, and international standards bodies. This requires financial support for equitable participation, as well as multi-lingual drafting and inclusive deliberation practices that amplify diverse epistemologies and values. Ensuring balanced representation will help shift the global AI discourse away from dominance by a handful of countries and companies.

362. AI governance must be integrated into broader development and sustainability strategies. This includes setting clear metrics for how AI could improve health, education, agriculture, and poverty reduction outcomes. Climate justice should also be embedded into AI infrastructure planning, from minimising the carbon footprint of data centres to managing the life cycle of e-waste. Anchoring AI governance in these wider agendas will help align innovation with global public goods.

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Working List of Countries of the Global South

From the G77

Exclusions (from the "Global South") based primarily on: (see Section 1.2 for further detail):

- Economic Characteristics: *China, Brunei, India, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, United Arab Emirates*
- Social Characteristics: *Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates*
- Political Characteristics: *Azerbaijan, India, Saudi Arabia*
- Historical and Geopolitical Characteristics: *China*
- Environmental and Development Characteristics: *most are Middle Income or Low Income*
- Note the paucity of Francophone, hispanophone and lusophone states

Central America	South America	Middle East	Africa			Asia	Pacific
Belize Costa Rica El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Nicaragua Panama **Caribbean** Antigua and Barbuda Bahamas Barbados Cuba Dominica Dominican Republic Grenada Haiti Jamaica Saint Kitts and Nevis Saint Lucia Saint Vincent and Grenadines Trinidad and Tobago	Argentina Bolivia Brazil Chile Colombia Ecuador Guyana Paraguay Peru Suriname Uruguay Venezuela	Iran Iraq Lebanon Occupied Territories Syria	Algeria Angola Benin Botswana Burkina Faso Burundi Cabo Verde Cameroon Central African Republic Chad Comoros Congo Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Rep. Congo Djibouti Egypt Equatorial Guinea Gabon	Gambia Ghana Guinea Guinea-Bissau Eritrea Eswatini Ethiopia Kenya Lesotho Liberia Libya Madagascar Malawi Maldives Mali Mauritania Mauritius Morocco Mozambique	Namibia Niger Nigeria Rwanda São Tomé and Príncipe Senegal Seychelles Sierra Leone Somalia South Africa South Sudan Sudan Togo Tunisia Uganda Tanzania Zambia Zimbabwe	Afghanistan Bangladesh Bhutan Brunei Darussalam Cambodia Indonesia Laos Malaysia Mongolia Myanmar Nepal North Korea Pakistan Philippines Sri Lanka Tajikistan Thailand Timor-Leste Turkmenistan Viet Nam	Fiji Kiribati Marshall Islands Micronesia Nauru Papua New Guinea Samoa Solomon Islands Tonga Vanuatu

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

From the Non-Aligned Movement

Exclusions (from the "Global South") based primarily on: (see Section 1.2 for further detail):

- Economic Characteristics: *India, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates*
- Social Characteristics: *Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates*
- Political Characteristics: *Azerbaijan, Belarus*
- Historical and Geopolitical Characteristics: *Azerbaijan, Belarus*
- Environmental and Development Characteristics: *most are Middle Income or Low Income*

Americas	**Middle East**	**Africa**			**Asia**	**Pacific**	**Europe**
Belize Bolivia Chile Colombia Ecuador Guatemala Guyana Honduras Nicaragua Panama Peru Suriname Venezuela **Caribbean** Antigua and Barbuda Bahamas Barbados Bolivia Cuba Dominica Dominican Republic Grenada Haiti Jamaica Saint Kitts and Nevis Saint Lucia Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Trinidad and Tobago	Bahrain Iran Iraq Jordan Kuwait Lebanon Oman Palestine Qatar Saudi Arabia Syria United Arab Emirates Yemen	Algeria Angola Benin Botswana Burkina Faso Burundi Cameroon Cabo Verde Central African Republic Chad Comoros Congo Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Republic of Congo Djibouti Egypt Equatorial Guinea	Eritrea Eswatini Ethiopia Gabon Gambia Ghana Guinea Guinea-Bissau Kenya Lesotho Liberia Libya Madagascar Maldives Malawi Mali Mauritania Mauritius Morocco	Mozambique Namibia Niger Nigeria Rwanda São Tomé and Príncipe Senegal Seychelles Sierra Leone Somalia South Africa Sudan Tanzania Togo Tunisia Uganda Zambia Zimbabwe	Afghanistan Bangladesh Bhutan Brunei Cambodia Timor-Leste Indonesia Laos Malaysia Mongolia Myanmar Nepal North Korea Pakistan Philippines Singapore Sri Lanka Thailand Turkmenistan Uzbekistan Vietnam	Timor-Leste Fiji Vanuatu *(very poor representation generally)*	Azerbaijan Belarus

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

From the *first virtual Voice of the Global South summit*

Exclusions (from the "Global South") based primarily on: (see Section 1.2 for further detail):

- Economic Characteristics: *India, Oman, United Arab Emirates*
- Social Characteristics: *Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates*
- Political Characteristics: *Azerbaijan, India*
- Historical and Geopolitical Characteristics: *Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia*
- Environmental and Development Characteristics: *most are Middle Income or Low Income*

Americas	**Middle East**	**Africa**			**Asia**	**Pacific**	**Europe**
Belize	Bahrain	Algeria	Ghana	Republic of Congo	Azerbaijan	Timor-Leste	Albania
Chile	Iraq	Benin	Guinea	Rwanda	Bangladesh	Kiribati	Armenia
Colombia	Iran	Botswana	Guinea-Bissau	São Tomé and	Bhutan	Marshall Islands	Belarus
Costa Rica	Lebanon	Burundi	Côte d'Ivoire	Príncipe	Cambodia	Micronesia	Bosnia and
Ecuador	Oman	Cameroon	Kenya	Senegal	Kazakhstan	Nauru	Herzegovina
El Salvador	Syria	Central African Republic	Lesotho	Seychelles	Kyrgyzstan	Palau	Georgia
Guatemala	United Arab Emirates	Chad	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Laos	Papua New Guinea	Moldova
Guyana	Yemen	Democratic Rep. Congo	Libya	Somalia	Malaysia	Samoa	North Macedonia
Honduras		Djibouti	Madagascar	South Sudan	Mongolia	Solomon Islands	Serbia
Nicaragua		Egypt	Malawi	Sudan	Myanmar	Tonga	
Panama		Equatorial Guinea	Mali	Tanzania	Nepal	Tuvalu	
Paraguay		Eritrea	Maldives	Togo	Philippines	Vanuatu	
Peru		Eswatini	Mauritania	Tunisia	Tajikistan		
Suriname		Ethiopia	Mauritius	Uganda	Thailand		
Uruguay		Gabon	Mozambique	Zambia	Turkmenistan		
Venezuela		Gambia	Namibia	Zimbabwe	Uzbekistan		
Caribbean			Niger		Vietnam		
Antigua and Barbuda			Nigeria				
Bahamas							
Barbados							
Cuba							
Dominica							
Dominican Republic							
Grenada							
Haiti							
Jamaica							
Saint Kitts and Nevis							
Saint Lucia							
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines							
Trinidad and Tobago							

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Proposed Global South countries based on: Economic Characteristics, Social Characteristics, Political Characteristics, Historical and Geopolitical Characteristics, and Environmental and Development Characteristics.

Americas	Middle East	Africa			Asia	Pacific
Central America	Iran	Algeria	Ghana	Republic of Congo	Afghanistan	Fiji
Belize	Iraq	Angola	Guinea	Rwanda	Bangladesh	Kiribati
Costa Rica	Lebanon	Benin	Guinea-Bissau	São Tomé and Príncipe	Bhutan	Marshall Islands
El Salvador	Oman	Botswana	Kenya	Senegal	Cambodia	Micronesia
Guatemala	Occupied Territories	Burkina Faso	Lesotho	Seychelles	Indonesia	Nauru
Honduras	Syria	Burundi	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Kazakhstan	Niue
Nicaragua	Yemen	Cabo Verde	Libya	Somalia	Kyrgyzstan	Palau
Panama		Cameroon	Madagascar	South Sudan	Laos	Papua New Guinea
South America		Central African Republic	Malawi	Sudan	Malaysia	Samoa
Argentina		Chad	Mali	Tanzania	Mongolia	Solomon Islands
Bolivia		Comoros	Maldives	Togo	Myanmar	Timor-Leste
Brazil		Côte d'Ivoire	Mauritania	Tunisia	Nepal	Tonga
Chile		Democratic Rep. Congo	Mauritius	Uganda	North Korea	Tuvalu
Colombia		Djibouti	Mozambique	Zambia	Pakistan	Vanuatu
Ecuador		Egypt	Namibia	Zimbabwe	Philippines	
Guyana		Equatorial Guinea	Niger		Sri Lanka	
Paraguay		Eritrea	Nigeria		Tajikistan	
Peru		Eswatini			Thailand	
Suriname		Ethiopia			Turkmenistan	
Uruguay		Gabon			Uzbekistan	
Venezuela		The Gambia			Vietnam	
Caribbean						
Antigua and Barbuda						
Bahamas						
Barbados						
Cuba						
Dominica						
Dominican Republic						
Grenada						
Haiti						
Jamaica						
Saint Kitts and Nevis						
Saint Lucia						
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines						
Trinidad and Tobago						

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Global AI Governance Alliance (GAIGANow) is building a broader Alliance committed to advancing safe, effective, accountable and inclusive global AI governance to help steer AI progress towards benefiting humanity and supporting a more just world.

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Suggested Citation

Pagett, R., 2026. Seeking Voices on AI from the Global South
Global AI Governance Alliance

SEEKING VOICES ON AI FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH
Global AI Governance Alliance | www.gaiganow.org

Cover design, text and layout by Karolina Gruzel, Nicole Fung