

# C.A.R.E. for AI Governance: Addressing Regional Challenges in the Global South

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## Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) governance is crucial for ensuring equitable and sustainable development, particularly in the Global South. However, existing governance models often overlook the unique socio-economic and infrastructural challenges these regions face. We propose the C.A.R.E. Framework, which emphasizes Community-led policymaking, Accountability, Regional collaboration, and Ethical AI adaptation. Our contribution lies in designing an inclusive, context-sensitive governance model tailored for Global South nations. Case studies demonstrate how our approach enhances fairness, transparency, and local agency in AI regulation. This work highlights the need for bottom-up governance, ensuring AI fosters empowerment rather than reinforcing global inequalities.

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## 1 Introduction

AI is rapidly transforming societies, especially in the Global South, where its potential to drive economic growth and address social challenges is significant. However, while AI governance frameworks in the Global North are often advanced, the Global South faces unique challenges in implementing effective AI systems due to infrastructural deficits, regulatory uncertainty, and economic disparities [6, 25]. Many nations in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East are adopting AI despite lacking the necessary infrastructure, such as reliable electricity, internet access, and local data centers, which forces them to depend on foreign technology companies. This dependency raises concerns around data sovereignty and digital privacy [16]. Additionally, many regions suffer from weak regulatory frameworks and insufficient local AI expertise, which hampers the development of a homegrown, equitable, and sustainable AI ecosystem [16, 20]. These contextual challenges necessitate governance models that are tailored to the specific needs and realities of the Global South, rather than adapting those of the Global North.

Despite the vast opportunities AI offers, the poor governance of AI in the Global South risks exacerbating existing inequalities. AI systems, often based on Western-centric datasets, can perpetuate biases that marginalize disadvantaged communities, while the dominance of multinational corporations in AI development

leads to economic dependencies that limit local control over digital infrastructure [2, 3]. Furthermore, the lack of inclusive and context-sensitive AI governance frameworks undermines the ability of local institutions to address issues such as unfair labor automation, biased decision-making, and data protection violations [7, 19]. There is a significant gap in research focused on the specific needs of the Global South in AI governance, particularly in terms of ensuring local empowerment, inclusivity, and the ethical use of AI. Moreover, existing models are often top-down and fail to address the lived experiences of the populations they aim to serve. This paper aims to fill this gap by proposing a governance framework that emphasizes local engagement, participatory decision-making, and context-sensitive ethical guidelines.

Our contribution lies in developing a comprehensive AI governance framework designed specifically for the Global South, prioritizing inclusivity, accountability, and regional collaboration. We argue that AI governance must extend beyond technical and legal aspects to embrace a human-centered approach, grounded in the socio-political and infrastructural realities of these regions [4]. Our framework emphasizes the importance of fostering trust among local communities, ensuring that ethical AI development is a collective effort where affected populations have a direct role in shaping technology. We also propose strategies to strengthen local AI infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and economic self-sufficiency, thereby reducing dependence on foreign technology and promoting digital sovereignty. By providing this framework, we aim to offer a sustainable model that ensures AI becomes a tool for social good, driving inclusive growth while safeguarding human dignity and rights [22].

## 2 Background and Motivation

AI governance is about more than just laws. It is about ensuring AI serves people equitably, ethically, and sustainably. While AI offers opportunities for economic growth and social welfare, its benefits remain unevenly distributed, particularly in the Global South, where structural and socio-political challenges hinder the development of an inclusive AI ecosystem [19]. A major hurdle is the digital divide, as many regions lack reliable electricity, internet access, and computing resources [16]. Without local AI expertise, talent often migrates to better-funded countries, weakening homegrown AI industries [20]. Additionally, the absence of local data centers forces dependence on foreign tech giants, raising concerns about data privacy and digital sovereignty [11]. Weak regulatory frameworks further exacerbate these challenges, as many countries lack clear AI policies, leaving governance fragmented and reactive [7]. Institutional weaknesses make it difficult to address risks such as bias, unfair labor automation, and data protection

violations. Meanwhile, AI in the Global South is largely dominated by multinational corporations, leading to economic dependencies that limit local control over critical digital infrastructure [3]. Data sovereignty is another pressing issue, as much of the data generated in these regions is processed and monetized by companies in the Global North, creating power imbalances where governance decisions fail to reflect local priorities [21]. Moreover, AI systems are often built on Western-centric datasets, making them poorly suited for local languages, traditions, and social norms, which leads to biased decision-making that further marginalizes disadvantaged communities [2]. Ethical AI frameworks from the Global North may impose foreign perspectives that misrepresent local realities, making context-sensitive governance crucial [5]. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach that prioritizes local empowerment, ethical AI practices, and inclusive policymaking. By strengthening infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and economic self-sufficiency, countries in the Global South can build a just, transparent, and sustainable AI ecosystem—ensuring AI becomes a tool for social good rather than deepening inequalities [22].

### 3 C.A.R.E. for AI Governance: Methodology

To address the multi-dimensional challenges of AI governance in the Global South, we introduce the C.A.R.E. Framework—a structured approach designed to ensure AI regulation is participatory, transparent, and aligned with local needs. This framework consists of four key pillars: Community-Led Policymaking, Accountability and Oversight, Regional Collaboration for AI Regulation, and Ethical AI Development and Local Adaptation. These pillars provide a foundation for AI governance that prioritizes social justice, inclusivity, and long-term sustainability.

#### 3.1 Community-Led Policymaking

Top-down governance models often fail to capture the lived realities of people most affected by AI. Governance should be rooted in local contexts, ensuring that policies are shaped by the communities they impact rather than dictated by elite policymakers, foreign corporations, or international bodies with little understanding of local nuances [17].

**Public Consultations:** Governments and AI developers must engage citizens through town halls, community dialogues, and digital platforms that enable meaningful participation. Feedback mechanisms should be designed to incorporate diverse perspectives, including those of marginalized groups [15].

**Grassroots Initiatives:** Encouraging locally driven AI projects ensures that technology serves real needs rather than imposing external priorities. Open-source AI development and community-led data labeling efforts can help ensure technology aligns with regional concerns.

**Community Data Trusts:** Empowering communities to take ownership of their data can help prevent exploitative practices and ensure equitable distribution of AI-driven benefits. This requires the establishment of data stewardship models, legal protections, and ethical guidelines for responsible data use.

#### 3.2 Accountability and Oversight

For AI to be a tool for empowerment rather than oppression, there must be mechanisms to ensure fairness, transparency, and justice

[12]. Without oversight, AI can exacerbate systemic biases and perpetuate harm.

**Bias Audits:** AI systems must undergo regular assessments to detect and mitigate biases, particularly in high-risk areas such as criminal justice, hiring, financial services, and healthcare. Governments should mandate independent audits of AI models deployed in public and private sectors.

**Transparency Mechanisms:** AI models should not operate as black boxes. Developers must provide explainable AI outputs, algorithmic impact assessments, and accessible documentation to enable scrutiny by researchers, regulators, and the public.

**Legal Redress:** Individuals affected by unfair AI decisions must have access to justice. This includes AI ombudsman offices, algorithmic appeals processes, and legally enforceable rights to challenge AI-driven decisions. The establishment of AI courts or regulatory bodies specializing in AI-related disputes can further strengthen legal oversight.

### 3.3 Regional Collaboration for AI Regulation

AI governance cannot be confined within national borders, as challenges such as data privacy, algorithmic accountability, and AI deployment by multinational corporations require regional cooperation.

**Harmonized Standards:** Countries in the Global South should collaborate to develop shared AI regulatory frameworks that ensure legal consistency and prevent fragmentation. This would facilitate responsible AI adoption while avoiding the replication of restrictive or ineffective policies.

**Cross-Border Cooperation:** Governments can establish regional AI councils or alliances to share best practices, coordinate enforcement strategies, and jointly develop AI research infrastructure. Such collaboration can also strengthen cybersecurity and protect against cross-border AI-related risks.

**Collective Bargaining:** The Global South has often been at a disadvantage in negotiations with multinational tech firms. By forming regional coalitions, countries can negotiate equitable data-sharing agreements, fair AI deployment policies, and technology transfer mechanisms that prioritize local interests.

### 3.4 Ethical AI Development and Local Adaptation

A key challenge in AI governance is ensuring that AI technologies are not only technically sound but also socially and culturally responsible. Ethical AI development must reflect local realities, values, and linguistic diversity.

**Fair AI Policies:** Governments should establish AI policies that explicitly prioritize equity, non-discrimination, and human rights, ensuring that AI benefits all segments of society, including marginalized communities.

**Linguistic and Cultural Inclusion:** Many AI models are trained primarily on Western data, leading to the exclusion of non-English speakers, indigenous populations, and culturally diverse communities. AI systems must be adapted to accommodate local languages, dialects, and sociocultural norms to avoid systemic discrimination [16].

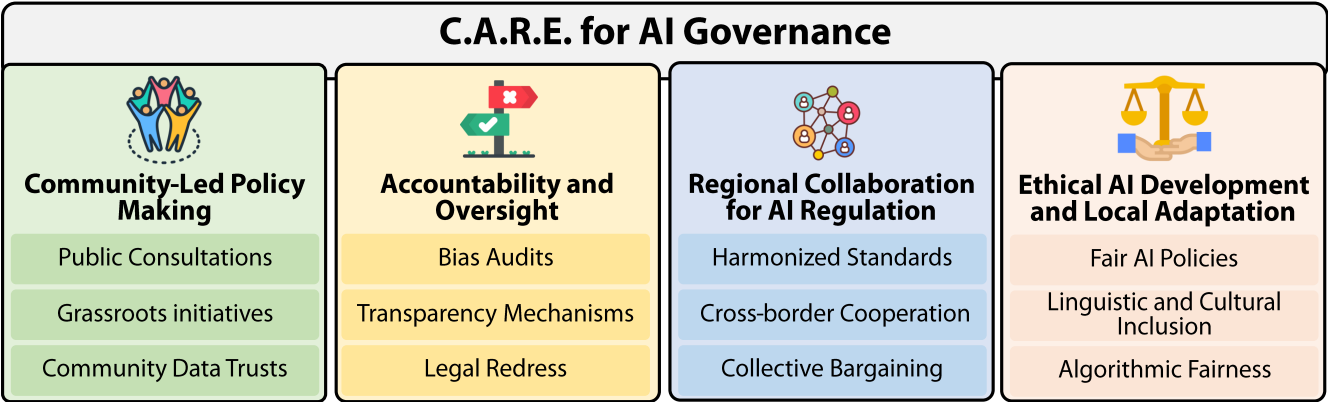


Figure 1: C.A.R.E. for AI Governance: Framework Components

**Algorithmic Fairness:** Developers must integrate bias detection, fairness constraints, and inclusive training datasets to minimize discriminatory outcomes and ensure equitable AI access.

By centering governance around these four pillars, the C.A.R.E. Framework offers a roadmap for AI governance that is inclusive, just, and contextually appropriate for the Global South. Rather than imposing rigid top-down regulations, this approach ensures that AI development is participatory, transparent, and responsive to the lived experiences of local communities. In doing so, it lays the foundation for AI to be a tool of empowerment rather than a source of deepened inequality.

4 Case Study: AI Governance in Kenya

Kenya offers a compelling example of how AI governance can be tailored to local realities, demonstrating that policies need not simply mirror those of the Global North to be effective [14]. Rather than adopting foreign models wholesale, Kenya has crafted an AI strategy that strikes a balance between innovation and regulation, ensuring that technological progress aligns with the country’s specific challenges and opportunities [9]. This approach recognizes that governance must be adaptive and context-sensitive to address the unique socio-political and infrastructural circumstances within the country. A key milestone in Kenya’s AI governance journey was the introduction of the Kenyan Data Protection Act (2019), which, while inspired by Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), was carefully adapted to suit Kenya’s specific needs and capacity [23]. Unlike the more mature regulatory systems in the Global North, Kenya’s approach to data protection has been incremental, focusing on gradual implementation, building enforcement capacity, and ensuring that compliance mechanisms align with the country’s digital ecosystem [10]. This measured approach highlights the importance of flexibility in governance to accommodate local conditions. Moreover, Kenya has placed a strong emphasis on inclusive policymaking by actively engaging government agencies, academia, industry, and civil society in the development of AI policies [13]. These collaborative efforts ensure that AI governance prioritizes ethics, digital inclusion, and accountability, reflecting the needs and concerns of the population, especially marginalized groups.

In addition to regulatory frameworks, Kenya has fostered a robust environment for AI research and public-private partnerships,

with key institutions such as the Ministry of ICT and KICTANet playing pivotal roles in aligning AI strategies with national development goals [13]. Furthermore, the country has engaged in regional AI policy dialogues through organizations like the African Union and the Smart Africa Alliance, recognizing that AI’s impact transcends national borders and must be managed collaboratively across the continent [24]. A critical component of Kenya’s strategy to bridge the digital divide is its investment in AI education and workforce development, ensuring that AI tools are leveraged to improve sectors like agriculture, healthcare, and finance—particularly in rural and underserved communities. Kenya’s experience underscores the importance of tailoring AI governance to local needs and emphasizes the value of participatory decision-making and ethical oversight in creating a future where technological advancements benefit all citizens. By focusing on local empowerment and ethical governance, Kenya is paving the way for an AI-driven future that is inclusive, transparent, and aligned with the broader goals of social and economic development.

5 Concluding Remarks

AI governance in the Global South requires a fundamental shift towards models that account for local challenges and opportunities. It is clear that adopting governance frameworks from the Global North is insufficient and potentially detrimental, as they fail to address the unique infrastructural limitations, economic dependencies, and socio-political contexts faced by these regions [1]. Instead, a more nuanced, people-centered approach is necessary—one that ensures inclusivity, regional collaboration, and ethical AI development. By prioritizing community participation and local expertise, AI can be harnessed not only as a tool for economic growth but also as a means of promoting social equity and bridging existing digital divides. It is crucial that AI governance evolves continuously, driven by ongoing research and dynamic policymaking, to respond effectively to emerging risks and opportunities [18].

For AI governance in the Global South to be truly transformative, it must be deeply rooted in local values and responsive to the diverse needs of its populations. Ensuring that AI serves as a force for fairness and human rights—rather than exacerbating inequalities—requires frameworks that integrate transparency, accountability, and inclusivity at their core [8]. By fostering strong, collaborative partnerships across governments, civil society, and

the private sector, the Global South has the potential to lead the way in ethical, responsible, and sustainable AI development. In doing so, it can challenge existing power imbalances and build a digital future where AI serves all people, fostering a more just and equitable world for future generations.

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