

African AI Readiness and Maturity Data Stories



Organization: Multilateral

Data Type: Official statistics, Private sector data, Geospatial data, Administrative data, Artificial Intelligence, Monitoring and evaluation, Data for SDG monitoring, Cross cutting

Region: Regional

Timeline: July-September 2026: establish the ECA task team, refine the indicator framework, and begin the continental mapping exercise. October-December 2026: pilot country and sector diagnostics, consult RECs, NSOs, and policy institutions, and validate the NSO/public data preparedness module. January-June 2027: publish the first African AI Readiness and Maturity Index and country profiles, alongside a model national AI strategy framework. July-December 2027: institutionalize annual reporting, expand sector coverage, and use the findings to support capacity development and peer learning.

Contact Person: Lerato Makana

eca-accs-ood@un.org

Sponsoring Organization:

African Centre for Statistics (ACS) at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

Supporting Organization(s):

STATAFRIC, AUC, AfDB

Objective:

Develop and institutionalize an annual African AI Readiness and Maturity Index as an Africa Beyond the Numbers data story. The objective is to support ECA, member States, RECs, NSOs, and sector ministries with a practical diagnostic that measures country and sector readiness, exposes data and capability gaps, informs national AI strategies, and strengthens accountable, Africa-centred AI governance. The index will be designed as a peer-learning and policy-improvement tool, not a simple ranking.

Description:

Africa is entering the AI era with uneven readiness: weak infrastructure, fragmented data systems, limited public-sector skills, emerging governance frameworks, insufficient language resources, and dependence on imported platforms. A concept note on Governing Artificial Intelligence in Africa highlights low connectivity, limited broadband access, and major electricity constraints alongside legal, institutional, and capacity gaps. Without a shared measurement framework, member States cannot compare readiness, identify bottlenecks, coordinate investments, or govern AI deployment responsibly. The risk is an AI transition that widens inequalities, weakens data sovereignty, and leaves African institutions adapting to rules and technologies designed elsewhere. The commitment responds by turning AI readiness into a policy-ready statistical block that links infrastructure, data, governance, capacity, and public value.

ECA/ACS, working with partners, will map African AI policies, applications, data institutions, compute resources, language resources, assurance mechanisms, and centres of excellence. It will develop readiness diagnostics, sectoral governance checklists, country profiles, and an annual mixed-method index using quantitative indicators, document review, expert validation, and country consultations. The statistical block will include an NSO and public data system preparedness module covering interoperability, administrative data integration, geospatial capability, metadata quality, disaggregation, privacy protection, and data science readiness. Intended outcomes are better targeted AI investments, stronger data governance, more transparent procurement, and shared regional learning.

Progress will be tracked through ECA governance and ACS workplans, with partner validation at key milestones. Success measures include: completion of continental mapping; number of countries and sectors assessed; publication of the index and country profiles; uptake by national AI strategies, NSOs, and RECs; number of capacity-building events delivered; evidence that the diagnostics guide data-system investments; and feedback from member States on usability. The index will be updated annually, and progress can be reported through ECA platforms and UNWDF/Commit to Data channels.