



Strategy

Shaping Data and AI for Fair, Sustainable Progress

Our approach to AI

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**Global
Partnership**
for Sustainable
Development Data

With thanks to

Our partners who have shared their guidance, expertise, and ideas with us:

Africa

Africa Digital Rights Hub

Action Lab Africa

African Observatory for AI

Digital Earth Africa

Ghana Statistical Services

Government of Kenya

IDinsight

Jomo Kenyatta University of
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Kenya National Bureau of
Statistics

Local Development Research
Institute

Open Institute

Paradigm Initiative

Pollicy

University of Nairobi

Asia

Aapti Institute

Assistive Technologies for Disability
Trust

Athena Infonomics

Multilateral/Global

UNESCO

UNSD

World Bank

Americas

Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico
Internacional

D-Tree

data.org

Data2X

Development Gateway, an IREX
Venture

Digital Impact Alliance

Hewlett Foundation

International Center for
Not-for-Profit Law

International Development Research
Centre

LinkedIn

Mozilla Foundation

NVIDIA

Europe

Connected by Data

The Data Tank

Deutsche Gesellschaft für

Internationale Zusammenarbeit

Open Data Charter

The Open Data Institute

UK Foreign, Commonwealth &
Development Office

UK Office for National Statistics

Wellcome Trust

How we got here: a collaborative journey

This strategy is the product of two years of exploration, conversation, and collaboration across our network.

Together with our partners, we have shaped this strategy through practical engagement, critical dialogue, and shared learning. We've supported national planning efforts, such as [Kenya's national AI strategy](#), and co-authored foundational guidance, such as the [AI Practitioner's Guide](#). We've worked alongside technical partners applying machine learning to real-world challenges like flood prediction and disease forecasting, while helping government agencies and civil society actors build capacity to engage with AI responsibly and meaningfully

These efforts have been complemented by a series of convenings, including [a dialogue series](#) co-hosted with Development Gateway, an IREX Venture (DG), which brought together diverse development actors to reflect on what AI means for their work. Across these dialogues and listening sessions in Nairobi and online, partners voiced a common concern: that AI must be shaped by local demand, embedded in existing systems, grounded in human and institutional capacity, and with people at the center.

Our most recent network surveys reinforced these insights. They revealed the accelerating uptake of AI across sectors—AI tool adoption among partners increased from 35 percent in 2023 to 54 percent in 2024—and the persistent barriers that organizations face in adopting AI, including technical capacity, data availability, and knowledge of responsible AI

guidelines.¹ Importantly, they also revealed a hopeful outlook: Our partners are not looking for hype, but for thoughtful, inclusive approaches to AI that address real problems and advance sustainable development.

Our 2024-25 partner survey reinforced this, and while adoption patterns differ, partners increasingly prioritize collaboration, practical application, and cross-sector knowledge-sharing as the way to ensure AI meets development needs.

This strategy is built on all this collective insight and experience. It reflects what we've heard, learned, and tested with our partners and offers a shared vision for how we can shape AI that works for everyone.

¹ Insights from our 2023 and 2024 partner surveys are available at: <https://www.data4sdgs.org/blog/collaboration-knowledge-and-innovation-insights-our-annual-partner-survey> and <https://www.data4sdgs.org/blog/network-growth-and-evolving-priorities-trends-and-insights-our-2024-25-partners-survey>

A future where AI serves everyone

Our vision is a world where artificial intelligence accelerates sustainable development and where its benefits are not confined to a few actors, regions, or sectors, but shared widely and equitably.

In this world:

- AI systems are built on high-quality, inclusive, responsibly-governed data within enabling environments created by governments that support responsible AI development and use.
- People and communities - not just big companies - shape how AI is developed and used in contexts that are relevant to them.
- AI solutions are grounded in local realities and priorities, helping address urgent challenges in health, climate, food security, and more.
- Global cooperation enables local solutions to succeed.

Our unique contribution

If AI is the brain, data is the oxygen, nerves, and experiences that inform it, shaping what it does, how it learns, and who it serves. Data tends to be seen as binary and intangible, but the truth is that data isn't neutral. It determines what AI sees, who it learns from, and who it leaves out.

While the world rushes to try the latest AI products, platforms and solutions, we risk making it an accelerant of inequality instead of what it could be: a tool that helps people where they are and improves the conditions of the planet.

The Global Partnership's function is a catalytic one. We leverage the expertise of our network to focus on three development challenges we have prioritized: climate and health, agriculture and food security, and AI in development. Treating AI as a development challenge in its own right, we work with others to build the foundations that make AI fair, effective, and useful.

- We focus on data; its governance, inclusivity, and availability.
- We act as a trusted convener, bringing together governments, civil society, tech actors, funders, and multilaterals.
- Our network of 700+ partners allows us to spot gaps, share learning, and scale what works.

We help partners connect the dots, from responsible data use to AI governance and from real-time data access to capacity building. We are here to ensure that the benefits of AI reach those who need them most and that AI solutions are built on equitable and inclusive foundations.

Activating this strategy to build an AI future for everyone

We play three key roles to bring together political commitments, technical capacities, and relevant partnerships to shape AI that serves development and our vision on AI.

These roles and their outcomes are in the table below, and the following three pages contain an overview of the activities within each of these roles.

Our role	Outcome
Learning convenor	National institutions are empowered with the enhanced technical and governance capabilities necessary to develop and/or use AI responsibly and effectively.
Solutions broker	Multi-stakeholder coalitions and partnerships foster the collaborative application of AI tools to address development priorities.
Coalition builder	High-level political and financial commitments are catalyzed to prioritize safe and responsible AI.

Learning convenor

We connect people across countries and sectors to learn from each other and help governments obtain the skills and support they need to leverage AI technologies responsibly.

Equip national institutions with the skills to use and govern data for AI

We provide training and tools to strengthen the ability of governments and public institutions to make informed decisions about AI adoption, oversight, and impact, and the data systems that support these.

Expand training in AI literacy, tools and methods use, and principles for responsible AI

Through our learning programs, we offer accessible training and resources that cover the basics of AI, responsible data practices, and how to assess and apply AI solutions.

Host practical dialogues on building “guardrails” for responsible AI

We bring together stakeholders to discuss real-world risks and design practical safeguards that promote fairness, accountability, and local relevance in AI systems.

Solutions broker

We match development challenges with the expertise and partnerships that can help address them.

Connect development partners with relevant AI tools and expertise

We match development needs with the data, tools, expertise, and partnerships that can help address them.

Facilitate peer exchange and case-sharing across sectors and regions

We create spaces where partners can share lessons from creating and applying AI solutions; what's worked, what hasn't, and how to adapt to different contexts.

Enable responsible data access and partnerships that unlock innovation

We support the creation of data-sharing agreements and partnerships, including between governments and the private sector, ensuring quality data is used for AI while protecting rights and fostering trust.

Coalition builder

We help align diverse actors around shared agendas for responsible and inclusive AI.

Elevate diverse voices in global AI governance spaces

We ensure underrepresented actors, especially from the Global South, are part of decision-making spaces where global AI norms are being shaped.

Align partners around common messages and agendas for AI that centers development needs

We coordinate joint advocacy so that stakeholders from underrepresented groups in governments and civil society, especially from the Global South, can speak with greater influence in global conversations about AI.

Contribute to shaping norms and policies that put people first

We help translate insights from practice into policy, ensuring that emerging AI frameworks reflect principles of equity, accountability, and inclusion.

How to engage with us

We invite you to engage with our work on AI in four ways:

Program and project collaboration. Work with us on applying AI and data responsibly to real development challenges, co-designing solutions that can be tested and scaled.

Policy and governance. Partner with us to shape and strengthen accountable data and AI governance frameworks, ensuring policies reflect equity, transparency, and inclusion.

Learning and dialogue. Join our collaborative discussions and knowledge-sharing efforts to test ideas, exchange lessons, and build collective capacity across sectors.

Donor partnerships. Invest in catalytic initiatives that link policy, practice, and partnerships, enabling responsible AI to strengthen institutions, unlock innovation, and advance global goals in health, climate, and equity.

Get in touch with us at info@data4sdgs.org or contact Janet McLaren directly at jmclaren@data4sdgs.org

At the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Janet McLaren, Policy Manager, and Linet Kwamboka Nyang'au, Senior Manager, Innovation for Development, led the research and writing of this strategy. Muthoni Mugo, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Program Manager, and Mmachukwu Oyeka-Chinweoke, Fundraising Officer, contributed to the final work. Lizzy Hvide, Associate Director of Communications, shaped the final product and provided input along the way.

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