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Bridging the AI Divide

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Abstract.

Two years after the adoption of the Global Digital Compact, the gulf between the AI governance capacity of the Global North and the Global South has not narrowed; in several measurable dimensions, it has widened. The Global AI Readiness Index records a composite governance score of 55 for high-income countries against 27 for developing economies, a two-to-one disparity that mirrors and amplifies the underlying connectivity, skills, and investment divides. The Independent International Scientific Panel on AI delivered its preliminary assessment in July 2026, and the first Global Dialogue on AI Governance concluded in Geneva with over fifteen hundred written submissions, yet the institutional mechanisms established by the Compact remain populated predominantly by Northern expertise and shaped by Northern epistemic frameworks. This scholarly article, published by the CyberSec Journal in collaboration with AUN Digital, argues that bridging the AI divide requires not only new indices and capacity-building programmes but a fundamental shift in how civil-society organisations participate in and model AI governance. Drawing on the concept of reflexive governance, the report introduces a framework whereby advocacy organisations that adopt AI tools in their own operations can generate credible, citable evidence about responsible AI use in development contexts, thereby contributing to the very governance debate they seek to influence. The report surveys the post-Compact institutional landscape, assesses the coverage gaps in existing measurement frameworks, and proposes a Reflexive Governance Framework for civil-society AI adoption, calibrated to the forward runway leading to the 2027 Global Dialogue in New York and the high-level review of the Compact at the eighty-second session of the General Assembly.

Keywords: AI governance; digital divide; Global Digital Compact; reflexive governance; Global South; CyberSec Journal; AI readiness

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1. Introduction

In September 2024, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Digital Compact as an annex to the Pact for the Future, the document was hailed as the first comprehensive multilateral framework for digital cooperation in two decades. Its five pillars, covering connectivity, inclusive digital economies, digital safety, data governance, and artificial intelligence, were accompanied by two institutional innovations of genuine ambition: an Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, modelled conceptually on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and a Global Dialogue on AI Gover-

nance intended to provide a permanent forum for multistakeholder deliberation.[1][2] For the Advocacy Unified Network, which had published its own strategic framework for Global South digital leadership in the CyberSec Journal just days before the Compact's adoption, these developments represented both a vindication and a challenge.[3] The vindication lay in the Compact's explicit recognition that the digital divide was not merely a connectivity gap but a governance gap, and that developing countries needed support not only to connect to digital networks but to shape the rules governing them. The challenge lay in the gap between institutional ambition and operational reality, a gap that two years of implementation have done little to close.

As of August 2026, the empirical picture is sobering. The International Telecommunication Union's Innovation and Development Index reports that 2.2 billion people remain offline, with progress toward universal connectivity slowing for the third consecutive year.[4] The Global AI Readiness Index, published in early 2026, documents a composite governance capacity score of 55 for high-income countries compared with 27 for developing economies, a two-to-one disparity that has remained essentially unchanged since 2023.[5] The Stanford AI Index 2026 confirms that 87 per cent of foundation AI models originate in high-income countries and that 91 per cent of global AI startup investment is concentrated in just ten economies, all of them in the Global North or China.[6] These figures suggest that the Global Digital Compact's implementation is proceeding on a terrain of structural inequality that the Compact itself, for all its normative ambition, has yet to alter in any measurable way.

This report proposes a distinctive contribution to addressing that inequality. Its central argument is that civil-society organisations operating in the digital governance space possess a reflexive advantage that, if properly leveraged, can generate a form of evidence and influence unavailable to governments, multilateral institutions, or private-sector actors. Organisations such as AUN that are themselves adopting AI tools in their research, advocacy, and operational workflows can do something that few other actors in the AI governance debate can credibly claim: they can model the governance they advocate. A civil-society research organisation that transparently discloses its use of AI, subjects that use to human accountability, and publishes its findings about the experience is not merely producing scholarship about AI governance; it is performing it.[7] This reflexive approach, the report argues, is particularly valuable in the context of the Global South, where the dominant modes of AI governance discourse are either theoretical prescriptions from Northern academics or regulatory models transplanted from Northern jurisdictions, and where the need for practice-grounded evidence about responsible AI adoption in development contexts is acute and largely unmet.

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 maps the current state of the AI divide using the most recent available data from major indices. Section 3 assesses the Global Digital Compact at its two-year midpoint, examining the institutional architecture that has emerged and the extent to which Global South voices

have shaped it. Section 4 surveys the measurement landscape, identifying what existing indices capture and what they miss, and situates the GDC Governance Index proposed by the CyberSec Journal in 2025 within this ecosystem. Section 5 examines capacity-building frameworks, including the World Bank's "Four Cs" model and "Small AI" concept, and assesses regional strategies from the African Union and ASEAN. Section 6 introduces the report's core contribution: a Reflexive Governance Framework for civil-society AI adoption. Section 7 discusses the forward runway to the 2027 Global Dialogue and the high-level review at the eighty-second session of the General Assembly, proposing a strategy for written submissions and coalition-building. Section 8 addresses counterarguments and limitations. Section 9 concludes.

2. The AI Divide in 2026: Empirical Mapping

2.1 The Persistence of the Connectivity Gap

The most fundamental layer of the AI divide remains the connectivity divide itself. The ITU's Innovation and Development Index 2025, the organisation's most comprehensive measurement instrument to date, documented that 2.2 billion people, approximately 27 per cent of the global population, had never used the internet.[4] While this figure represented a decline from 2.6 billion in 2024, the rate of improvement had decelerated markedly, from an average annual reduction of 200 million in the 2019 to 2022 period to just 400 million over the subsequent two years combined. The ITU attributed this slowdown to a confluence of factors: the exhaustion of the "easy wins" in urban connectivity, persistent affordability barriers in low-income countries where a basic data plan still consumed more than 8 per cent of monthly household income on average, and the compounding effects of the global cost-of-living crisis on infrastructure investment in the poorest nations.[4] Gender gaps in internet use, though narrowing globally, remained above 20 percentage points in the least developed countries, and rural-urban disparities within developing nations continued to limit the reach of digital services to the populations that needed them most.[8] Figure 1 presents the trajectory of the offline population, illustrating the decelerating rate of improvement.

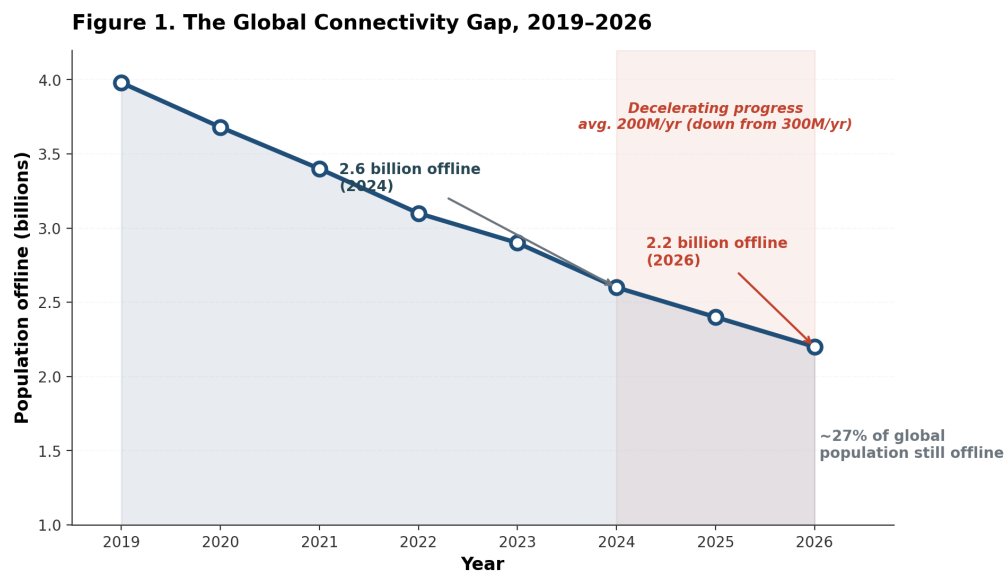


Figure 1. The Global Connectivity Gap, 2019–2026. Offline population has declined from 2.6 billion in 2024 to 2.2 billion in 2026, but the annual rate of improvement has slowed markedly.

The connectivity gap is not merely a precondition for the AI divide; it is increasingly constitutive of it. As AI systems migrate from cloud-based services accessed through web browsers to embedded intelligence in devices, networks, and infrastructure, the absence of reliable, affordable connectivity forecloses not only access to information but access to the algorithmic systems that mediate an expanding range of economic, social, and political interactions. The World Bank’s Digital Progress and Technology Report 2025, subtitled *AI Foundations*, drew explicit attention to this dynamic, noting that the countries most vulnerable to being bypassed by the AI revolution were precisely those where connectivity remained lowest, digital skills most scarce, and institutional capacity for governance weakest.[9] The report’s framing of the challenge in terms of foundational capacities rather than advanced technological sophistication was itself a significant conceptual contribution, redirecting attention from the frontier of AI innovation to the base of the digital pyramid.

2.2 The Emerging AI Governance Gap

Beyond connectivity, a distinct governance gap has emerged as a defining feature of the global AI landscape. The Global AI Readiness Index 2026, the most comprehensive comparative assessment of national AI governance capacity, evaluated 195 countries across 69 indicators organised in six pillars: technology, data, human capital, governance, ethics, and integration.[5] Its headline finding was the two-to-one disparity between Global North and Global South composite scores, but the disaggregated data revealed a more nuanced and, in some respects, more alarming picture. The governance pillar alone showed a gap of 55

to 27, indicating that the regulatory and institutional capacity to govern AI was distributed even more unequally than the technological capacity to deploy it. Only 54 per cent of countries worldwide possessed any form of national AI policy or strategy, and among low-income countries, the figure fell to 12 per cent. [5] Figure 2 visualises this disparity across the Index's six pillars. The construction of the composite score and the formal definition of the North–South disparity are given in Equations (1) and (2).

$$G_i = \sum_{p=1}^P w_p \cdot \bar{x}_i^p \quad (1)$$

where G_i = composite governance readiness score for country i (0–100 scale); P = number of assessment pillars (six: technology, data, human capital, governance, ethics, integration); w_p = weight assigned to pillar p , subject to the normalisation constraint $\sum w_p = 1$; $\bar{x}_i(p)$ = mean normalised score of country i on pillar p ; N_p = number of indicators within pillar p ; $x_{ij}(p)$ = normalised value (0–100) of indicator j in pillar p for country i .

Equation (1) specifies the composite construction underlying the Global AI Readiness Index: a weighted sum of pillar means, each itself an average of normalised indicator scores. Under equal weighting ($w_p = 1/P$), the 2026 Index reports headline composite scores of $\bar{G} = 55$ for high-income economies and $\bar{G} = 27$ for developing economies—values whose disparity is formalised in Equation (2).

$$\Delta_{NS} = \bar{G}_H - \bar{G}_D, R_{NS} = \frac{\bar{G}_H}{\bar{G}_D} \quad (2)$$

where Δ_{NS} = absolute North–South governance disparity (score points); R_{NS} = relative North–South disparity ratio (dimensionless); $\bar{G}_H$ = mean composite score across high-income countries; $\bar{G}_D$ = mean composite score across developing economies.

Substituting the 2026 Index values ($\bar{G}_H = 55$, $\bar{G}_D = 27$) gives $\Delta_{NS} = 28$ score points and $R_{NS} = 55/27 \approx 2.04$, quantifying the “two-to-one disparity” reported across all six pillars. A ratio R_{NS} exceeding 2 indicates that the governance gap is not merely absolute but structurally disproportionate: high-income countries more than double the developing-economy mean.

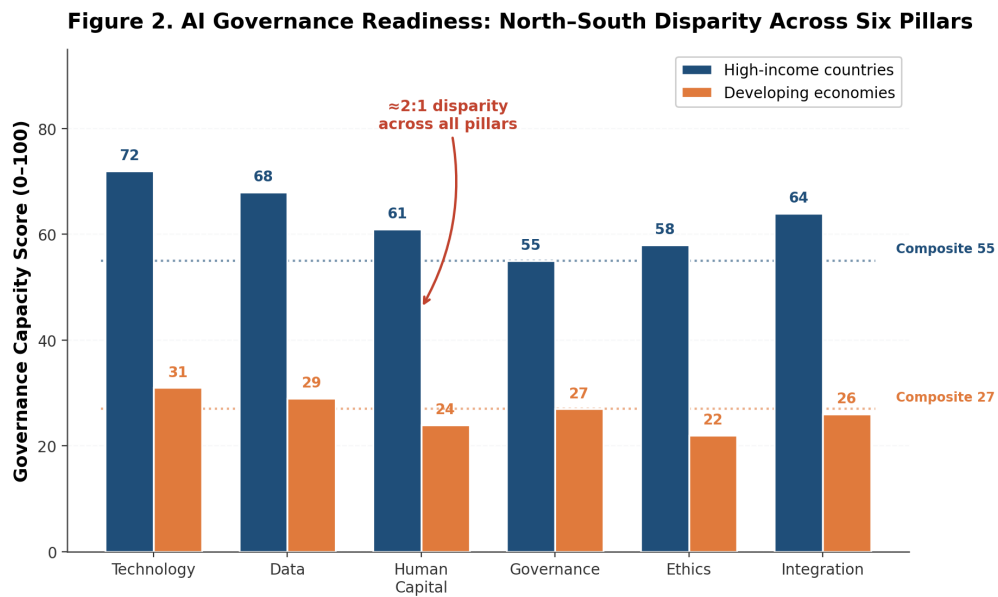


Figure 2. AI Governance Readiness: North–South Disparity Across Six Pillars. High-income countries score roughly twice as high as developing economies across every pillar of the Global AI Readiness Index.

The AI Governance Readiness and Assessment Index, published by a consortium of Southern research institutions in early 2026, reinforced these findings with a methodology specifically designed to capture dimensions of AI governance relevant to developing countries, including the alignment of AI policy with national development priorities, the extent of stakeholder consultation in AI policy design, and the capacity for enforcement of AI-related regulations.[10] Its results confirmed that the governance gap was not narrowing and suggested that, in the absence of targeted intervention, it was likely to widen as the complexity and sophistication of AI systems increased, demanding ever more advanced regulatory capacity that the poorest countries were least equipped to provide. The Oxford AI Readiness Index 2025, which assessed 195 countries across a broader set of 69 indicators, ranked Mauritius as the highest-scoring African nation at position 71, a placement that underscored the depth of the continental challenge when no Sub-Saharan African country besides the small island state appeared in the top half of the rankings.[11]

2.3 The Stanford Paradox: Concentration of Production and Funding

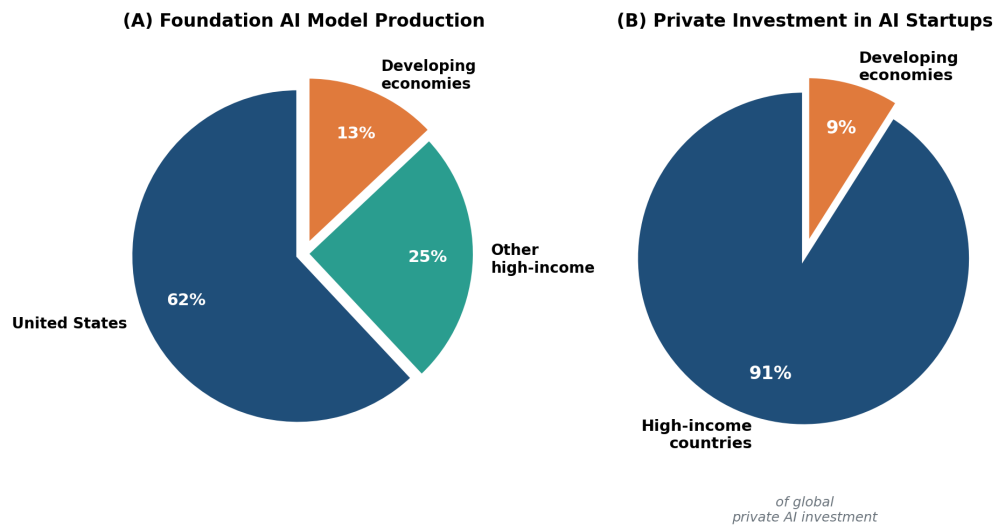
The Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence’s AI Index 2026, the most widely cited annual assessment of the state of AI globally, provided what may be the most striking illustration of the structural inequalities underlying the AI divide.[6] High-income countries produced 87 per cent of the foundation AI models tracked by the Index and received 91 per cent of the global private investment in AI startups. The United States alone accounted for 62 per cent of foundation model development and 71 per cent of private AI investment. China, the only developing-economy country to feature prominently in the

Index's production and investment statistics, was responsible for most of the remaining share. The rest of the developing world, encompassing some 140 countries and 6.5 billion people, collectively accounted for less than 10 per cent of both AI model production and investment. This concentration of productive capacity and financial resources in a handful of economies creates a structural dynamic in which the technologies reshaping global governance, labour markets, and social systems are designed, trained, and deployed by and for a tiny fraction of the world's population, while the vast majority are positioned as passive recipients of systems whose design parameters, training data, and deployment contexts reflect the priorities and assumptions of their creators.[6][12] Figure 3 presents this concentration of production and investment. The concentration of production and investment can be formalised using the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index, as set out in Equation (3).

$$HHI = \sum_{k=1}^K s_k^2, C_m = \sum_{k=1}^m s_k \quad (3)$$

where *HHI* = Herfindahl–Hirschman Index of AI production or investment concentration (normalised 0–1; values exceeding 0.25 indicate high concentration); *sk* = share of region *k* in global AI foundation-model production (or private investment); *K* = total number of producing regions or entities; *Cm* = cumulative concentration ratio for the top-*m* regions.

Applying Equation (3) to the Stanford HAI AI Index 2026 production shares—United States *s*₁ = 0.62, other high-income *s*₂ = 0.25, developing economies *s*₃ = 0.13—yields *HHI* = 0.62² + 0.25² + 0.13² ≈ 0.463 and a top-one concentration ratio *C*₁ = 0.62. Both metrics exceed standard thresholds for “highly concentrated” markets (*HHI* > 0.25; *C*₁ > 0.40), confirming the structural inequality that underlies the AI divide. The investment-side application produces an even more pronounced concentration (*HHI* ≈ 0.828), reflecting the 91 per cent of private AI capital flowing to high-income economies.

Figure 3. The Stanford Paradox: Concentration of AI Production and Investment

Source: Stanford HAI AI Index (2026). Foundation models tracked globally; private investment flows.

Figure 3. The Stanford Paradox: Concentration of AI Production and Investment. High-income countries dominate both foundation model production (87 per cent) and private investment flows (91 per cent).

The implications of this concentration for governance are profound. Countries that lack a domestic AI industry are also, as a general matter, countries that lack the technical expertise, the institutional memory, and the political leverage needed to participate effectively in international governance negotiations. The UNCTAD Technology and Innovation Report 2025 documented that less than one-third of developing countries had adopted a national AI strategy and that the AI market, valued at USD 189 billion in 2024, was projected to reach USD 4.8 trillion by 2033, with the vast majority of that value capture concentrated in the economies that were already leading in AI production.[12] The risk, as UNCTAD and others have argued, is that the AI revolution will replicate and amplify the patterns of extractive globalisation that have characterised previous technological transformations, with developing countries providing data, markets, and labour while the value added by AI accrues predominantly to the technology-exporting economies of the Global North.[9][12] Figure 4 models the layered structure through which these deficits compound.

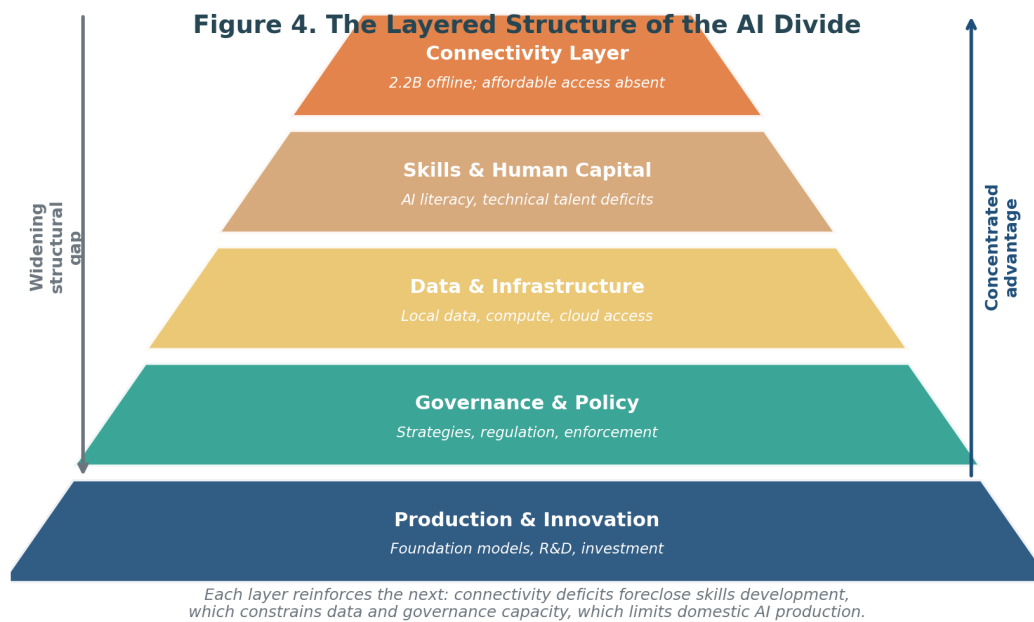


Figure 4. The Layered Structure of the AI Divide. Connectivity deficits foreclose skills development, which constrains data and governance capacity, which in turn limits domestic AI production.

3. The Global Digital Compact at Midpoint: From Negotiation to Implementation

3.1 Institutional Architecture: ODET and the Implementation Map

The Global Digital Compact's transition from a negotiated text to an operational framework has been overseen by the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, established within the United Nations system on 1 January 2025 as the principal institutional mechanism for coordinating the Compact's implementation.[13] ODET's mandate encompasses monitoring progress across the Compact's five pillars, facilitating the work of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, and providing secretariat support for the follow-up and review processes mandated by the General Assembly. The Office's first major deliverable, the Global Digital Compact Implementation Map, was published on 31 July 2025, providing a fifty-nine-page inventory of the initiatives, programmes, and institutional arrangements that had been established or proposed in the first year following the Compact's adoption.[14] The Implementation Map represented a significant exercise in institutional mapping, but its substance revealed the scale of the challenge: while it catalogued over two hundred distinct initiatives across the five pillar areas, it acknowledged that many of these were pre-existing programmes that had been relabelled rather than new commitments created in response to the Compact, and that coordination

among them remained largely aspirational.[14] Figure 5 diagrams the institutional architecture that has emerged to implement the Compact.

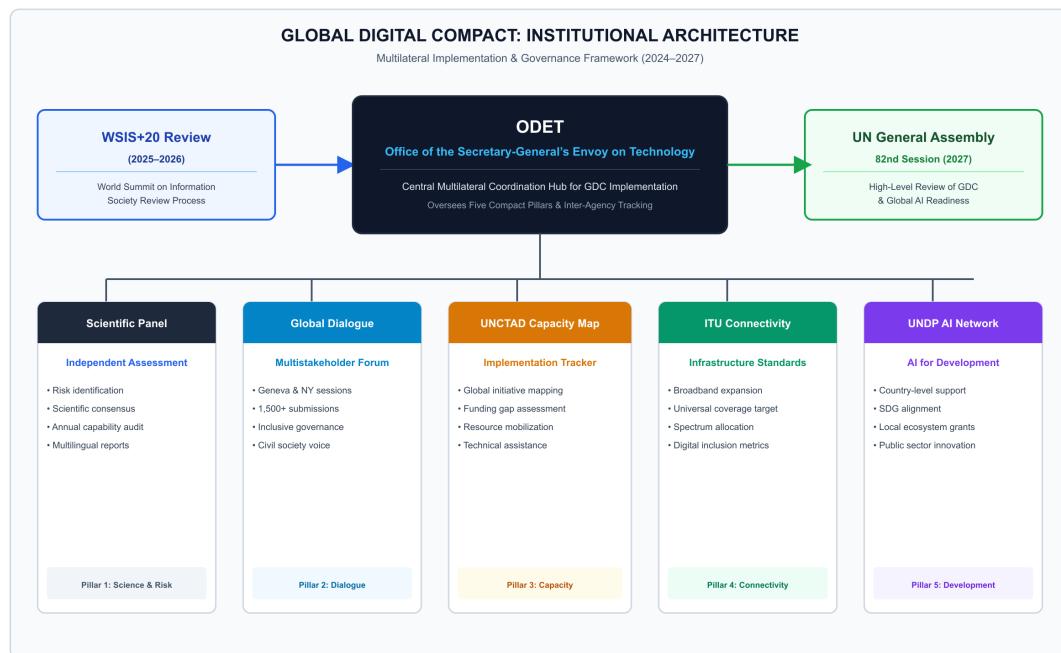


Figure 5. Global Digital Compact Institutional Architecture. ODET coordinates implementation across five pillars via the Scientific Panel, the Global Dialogue, and the UNCTAD implementation map.

The WSIS+20 review process, which culminated in a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on 16 and 17 December 2025 and the adoption of an outcome document by consensus, provided a critical complement to the Compact's institutional architecture. The outcome document mandated a comprehensive high-level review of the Global Digital Compact at the eighty-second session of the General Assembly in 2027, establishing a clear timeline and political expectation for assessing the Compact's implementation.[15] This mandate gave the Compact a review mechanism that it had lacked at adoption, and it created a focal point for advocacy, research, and coalition-building in the intervening period. For AUN and other civil-society organisations seeking to influence the Compact's trajectory, the 2027 review represents both a deadline and an opportunity: a deadline because the institutional design decisions that will determine the Compact's long-term shape are being made in the 2025 to 2027 window, and an opportunity because the review process will require evidence-based assessments of implementation progress, a need that civil-society research organisations are uniquely positioned to meet.[3][15] Figure 6 maps the principal milestones on the implementation timeline from adoption to the 2027 high-level review.

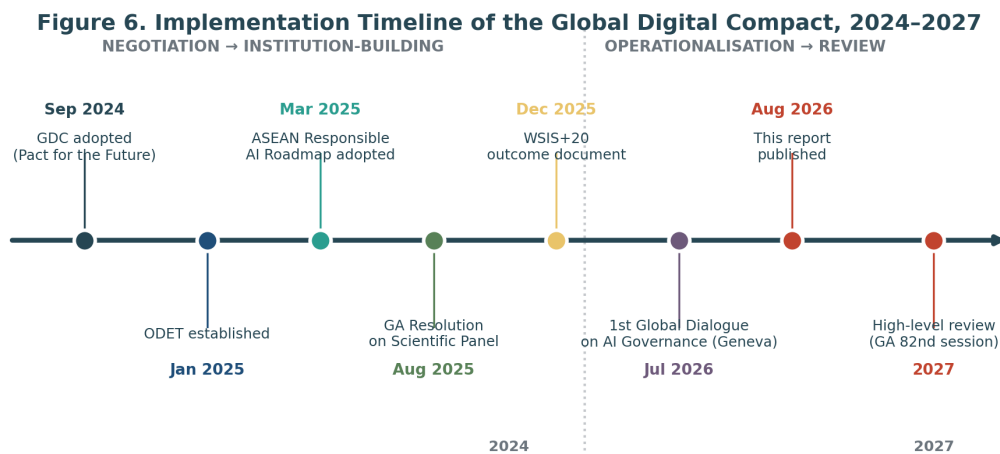


Figure 6. Implementation Timeline of the Global Digital Compact, 2024–2027. Key milestones from the Compact’s adoption through the forthcoming high-level review at the eighty-second session of the General Assembly.

3.2 The First Global Dialogue on AI Governance

The first session of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance convened in Geneva on 6 and 7 July 2026, marking the operational launch of one of the Compact’s two flagship institutional innovations. The Dialogue attracted more than fifteen hundred written submissions from governments, international organisations, civil-society groups, private-sector entities, and technical communities, a level of engagement that exceeded the expectations of its organisers and demonstrated the breadth of interest in multilateral AI governance.[16] The submissions covered a wide range of themes, from the governance of foundation models and the regulation of AI in military applications to the use of AI for sustainable development and the protection of cultural and linguistic diversity in AI training data. The Dialogue’s format, combining plenary sessions with themed working groups and an open Partnerships Hub for capacity-building proposals, reflected the multistakeholder model advocated by the Compact’s negotiators and represented a deliberate departure from the exclusively intergovernmental format of most UN negotiating processes.[16] However, early analysis of the submissions and proceedings suggests that the Dialogue’s inaugural session reproduced, rather than mitigated, the structural asymmetries it was designed to address. A preliminary assessment by the New York University Center on International Cooperation found that while 118 countries had participated in some form, the substantive contributions, measured by the depth and technical sophistication of the written submissions, were concentrated disproportionately in governments and organisations based in the Global North.[17] The Partnerships Hub, which operated from 26 May to 23 June 2026 and was intended to facilitate capacity-building partnerships between developed and developing countries, received a substantial number of proposals but faced challenges in matching the

supply of partnership offers with the specific capacity needs of developing-country institutions, many of which lacked the diagnostic frameworks needed to articulate those needs with precision.[16][17] These early implementation experiences underscore a recurring theme of the post-Compact landscape: the gap between the multilateral system's institutional ambitions and the operational capacity available to fulfil them, particularly in the Global South.

3.3 The Independent International Scientific Panel on AI

The Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, established by General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/325 on 26 August 2025, released its preliminary assessment on 1 July 2026, timed to coincide with the opening of the first Global Dialogue.[18] The Panel, composed of up to forty experts appointed with attention to geographic, gender, and disciplinary balance, was mandated to produce independent, evidence-based assessments of AI development, opportunities, risks, and impacts. Its preliminary report focused on three themes: the governance of general-purpose AI systems, the implications of AI for the Sustainable Development Goals, and the measurement of AI readiness and governance capacity across countries.[18] The report's treatment of the AI divide was notably more granular than the Compact's own language, distinguishing between different dimensions of readiness, including technical infrastructure, human capital, regulatory frameworks, and ethical oversight, and calling for the development of standardised measurement tools that could track progress across these dimensions over time.[18]

The Panel's composition and working methods, however, attracted criticism from some developing-country delegations and civil-society observers, who argued that the appointment process, while formally attentive to geographic balance, had produced a Panel in which Northern researchers and institutions remained overrepresented among the most influential voices. The concern was not merely about demographics but about epistemic framing: the questions the Panel chose to prioritise, the methodologies it employed, and the evidence it deemed authoritative all reflected, to a significant degree, the research traditions and policy preoccupations of the Global North.[17][18] For the Global South, the risk was that the Panel's assessments, however technically competent, would operate within a conceptual framework that treated developing-country contexts as deviations from a Northern norm rather than as distinct governance environments requiring distinct analytical tools. This dynamic, which scholars of global governance have termed epistemic asymmetry, is a structural feature of multilateral expert bodies and is not easily remedied by proportional representation alone.[19]

3.4 Regional Implementation Trajectories

While the multilateral implementation architecture has been the focus of considerable attention, some of the most significant post-Compact developments have occurred at the regional level. The African Union's Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy, endorsed in July 2024 and entering its second year of

implementation in 2026, has begun to produce concrete outcomes in several AU Member States, including the establishment of national AI research centres, the development of AI curricula in universities, and the formulation of national data governance frameworks aligned with the Strategy's seven growth areas. [20] The Strategy's implementation is supported by a dedicated coordination mechanism within the African Union Commission and by technical and financial assistance from UNESCO, the OECD, and bilateral development partners. However, progress has been uneven, with North African and Southern African countries advancing more rapidly than West and Central African nations, and with the Strategy's ambitious targets for pan-African AI capacity building facing constraints from limited domestic funding and competing development priorities.[20]

ASEAN's approach has been characterised by a voluntary, incremental model of AI governance cooperation. The expansion of the ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics in January 2025, followed by the adoption of a Responsible AI Roadmap 2025 to 2030 in March 2025, reflected the bloc's preference for flexible, non-binding frameworks that accommodate the significant differences in AI capacity among its ten Member States.[21] The roadmap emphasises the development of national AI governance frameworks, the establishment of regulatory sandboxes, and the promotion of responsible AI adoption in priority sectors including agriculture, healthcare, and education. In Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC's Observatory of Artificial Intelligence in Latin America, which produced its 2025 assessment covering nineteen countries and one hundred indicators, documented that the region invested four times less in AI than would be expected given its economic weight, and that governance frameworks remained fragmented across the region despite significant advances in individual countries, particularly Brazil and Uruguay. [22] These regional trajectories illustrate both the potential and the limitations of post-Compact implementation: the Compact has provided a normative framework and a set of institutional reference points, but the pace and pattern of implementation continue to be determined primarily by regional dynamics and domestic politics.

4. Measuring Implementation: The GDC Governance Index and the Measurement Landscape

4.1 From the 2024 Readiness Matrix to the 2025 Governance Index

The CyberSec Journal's 2024 flagship report, *Governing the Digital Frontier*, introduced a Digital Governance Readiness Matrix organised around five strategic imperatives for Global South digital leadership: building AI regulatory capacity, leveraging digital public infrastructure, asserting data sovereignty, strengthening cybersecurity resilience, and claiming voice in multilateral AI governance.[3] That matrix was explicitly designed as a Phase I diagnostic tool, intended to help countries and civil-society organ-

isations assess their positioning relative to the Compact's five pillars and to identify priority areas for capacity-building. In November 2025, the CyberSec Journal published a follow-up working paper that proposed the GDC Governance Index, a Phase II evaluative instrument designed to move beyond diagnostic readiness assessment to the measurement of actual implementation progress across the Compact's domains.[23] The Index comprises six dimensions, encompassing twenty indicators, scored on a four-point ordinal scale ranging from nascent through formal adoption and operational implementation to systemic integration, and classifying countries into five tiers from Foundational to Leading.[23] The conceptual progression from the Readiness Matrix to the Governance Index reflected a deliberate methodological choice: readiness assessment, while valuable for identifying gaps and prioritising interventions, measures potential rather than performance. A country may score well on readiness indicators, such as the existence of a national AI strategy or the establishment of a dedicated technology ministry, while making little progress in the actual implementation and enforcement of the commitments those instruments embody. The Governance Index was designed to capture this implementation dimension, assessing not only whether countries have adopted policies but whether those policies are operational, whether institutional mechanisms are functioning, and whether governance outcomes are improving. This shift from inputs to outcomes is consistent with broader trends in development measurement, where the limitations of input-based indicators have been widely acknowledged and where the demand for outcome-focused metrics has intensified in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[23]

4.2 Coverage Gap Analysis: What Existing Indices Miss

The proliferation of digital and AI-related indices in the 2024 to 2026 period, while welcome in principle, has created a fragmented measurement landscape in which no single instrument captures the full scope of the Global Digital Compact's ambitions. Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the principal indices, mapping their coverage against the Compact's five pillars and against the governance dimension that the Compact's implementation demands. The analysis reveals several significant coverage gaps. The ITU IDI and the UN E-Government Development Index, while comprehensive in their respective domains of connectivity and e-government, do not systematically assess AI governance capacity. The Oxford AI Readiness Index and the GIRAI provide detailed coverage of AI governance but are largely silent on cybersecurity resilience and data governance, two pillars of the Compact that are critical for developing countries. The AGILE Index, which assesses AI governance across forty countries with a methodology that includes deep dives on Africa and Latin America, provides the most contextually sensitive assessment of Southern AI governance but covers only forty countries, leaving the majority of developing economies unmeasured.[5][11][10][4][24]

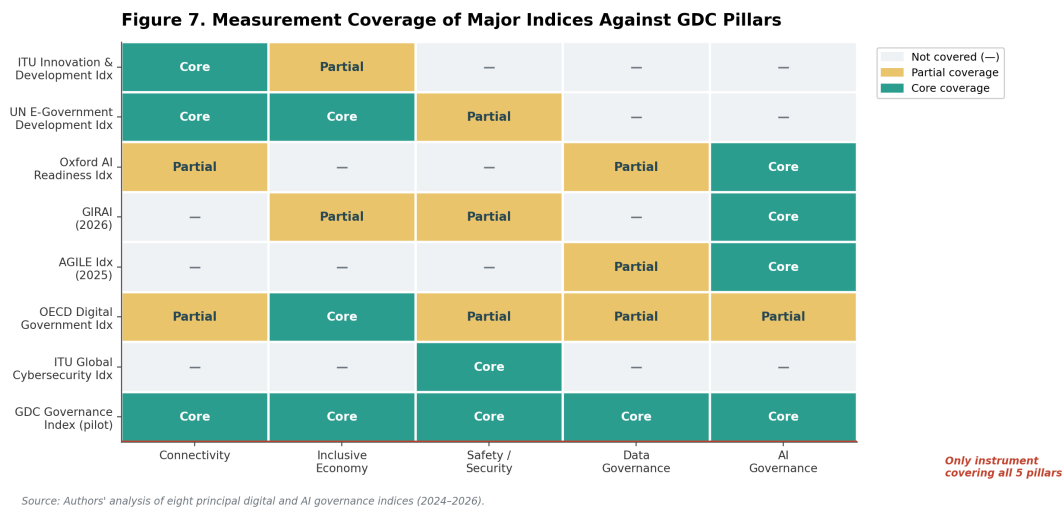


Figure 7. Measurement Coverage of Major Indices Against GDC Pillars. The GDC Governance Index is the only instrument designed to cover all five Compact pillars; existing indices each capture only a subset.

Index	Year	Coverage (Countries)	Connectivity / Divide	Inclusive Economy	Safety / Security	Data Governance	AI Governance
ITU Innovation and Development Index	2025	195	Yes (core)	Partial	No	No	No
UN E-Government Development Index	2024	193	Yes	Yes (core)	Partial	No	No
Oxford AI Readiness Index	2025	195	Partial	No	No	Partial	Yes (core)
GIRAI	2026	150+	No	Partial	Partial	No	Yes (core)
AGILE Index	2025	40	No	No	No	Partial	Yes (core)
OECD Digital Government Index	2025	36	Partial	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial
ITU Global Cybersecurity Index	v5	196	No	No	Yes (core)	No	No
GDC Governance Index	2025	Pilot	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1. Comparative Coverage of Major Digital and AI Governance Indices Against GDC Pillars

Figure 7 visualises this coverage analysis as a heatmap, making the fragmented measurement landscape immediately legible. The GDC Governance Index, while still in pilot phase, is the only instrument specifically designed to measure implementation across all five Compact pillars. Its comprehensive scope represents a significant conceptual advantage, but it faces the methodological challenge inherent in breadth: the risk that comprehensiveness comes at the cost of depth, and that the aggregation of diverse indicators into a single composite score obscures as much as it reveals. The Index’s designers have acknowledged this tension and have emphasised the importance of using the Index not as a ranking tool but as a diagnostic and accountability instrument, one that is most valuable when its disaggregated results are examined in

national and regional context rather than when its composite scores are compared across countries with vastly different starting points and development trajectories.[23]

4.3 Toward a Unified Measurement Framework

The fragmented measurement landscape points to a broader institutional challenge: the absence of a single, authoritative framework for assessing GDC implementation that is accepted by all stakeholders and that can serve as the evidentiary basis for the 2027 high-level review. The Independent International Scientific Panel on AI's preliminary assessment implicitly acknowledged this gap by calling for the development of standardised measurement tools, but the Panel's mandate is limited to AI governance and does not extend to the full scope of the Compact.[18] The practical implication is that the 2027 review will need to draw on multiple, partially overlapping measurement instruments, each with its own methodological assumptions, data sources, and coverage limitations. For civil-society organisations, this fragmentation represents both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge because producing a coherent assessment of Compact implementation requires synthesising evidence from diverse and sometimes contradictory sources, and an opportunity because the absence of a single authoritative framework creates space for alternative assessments, including those that foreground the perspectives and priorities of the Global South.[3][23] The CyberSec Journal's GDC Governance Index, refined through pilot application and peer review, is positioned to contribute to this synthesis, and this report's reflexive governance framework is intended to complement it by adding a dimension, the practice-grounded evidence of civil-society AI adoption, that no existing index currently captures.

5. Building Capacity: Frameworks for Developing-Country AI Readiness

5.1 The World Bank "Four Cs" and "Small AI"

The World Bank's Digital Progress and Technology Report 2025 introduced a conceptual framework that has rapidly gained traction among development practitioners and policymakers. The "Four Cs" framework, comprising Connectivity, Capability, Content, and Culture, identifies the four foundational conditions that must be in place for AI to contribute to, rather than undermine, sustainable development in low- and middle-income countries.[9] Connectivity encompasses not merely internet access but the quality, reliability, and affordability of digital infrastructure, including the computing resources needed to train and deploy AI models. Capability refers to the human capital dimension, including technical AI skills, data literacy, and the institutional capacity to govern AI effectively. Content addresses the availability of data and digital services in local languages and formats that are relevant to local development priorities. Culture encompasses the ethical, social, and regulatory norms that shape how AI is developed, deployed,

and governed in specific national and local contexts. Figure 8 diagrams the Four Cs framework and situates “Small AI” within it as a deployment philosophy.

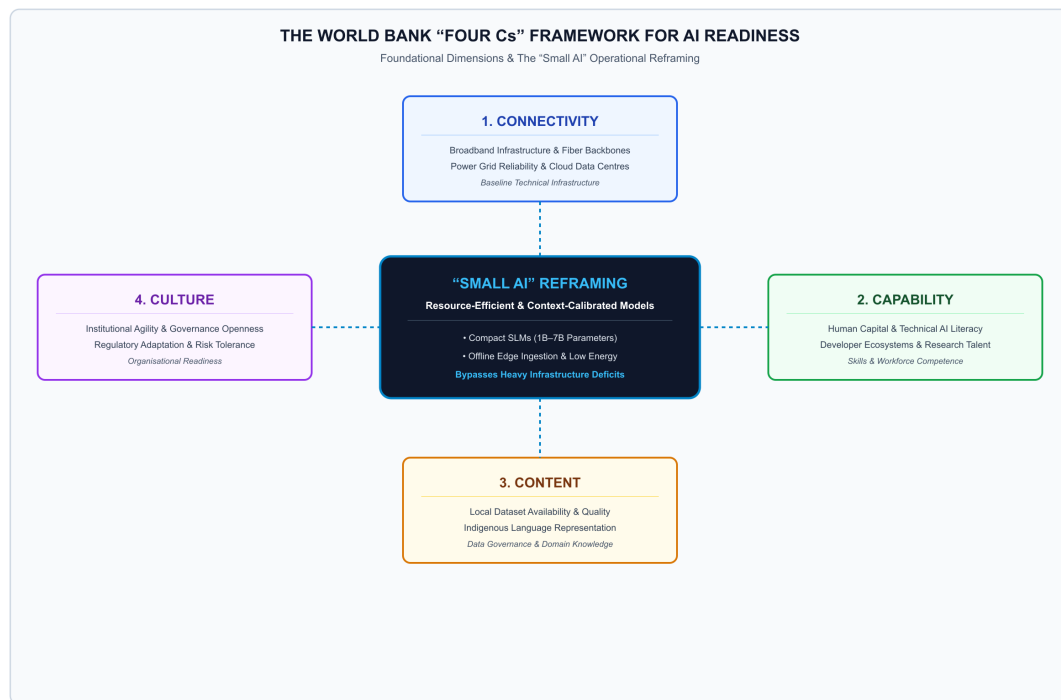


Figure 8. The World Bank “Four Cs” Framework for AI Readiness. Connectivity, Capability, Content, and Culture identify the foundational conditions for beneficial AI adoption; “Small AI” reframes deployment around compact, resource-efficient, context-specific tools.

The report’s most influential conceptual contribution, however, was the notion of “Small AI,” a deliberate counterpoint to the dominant narrative of frontier AI models that defines the global AI conversation. Small AI refers to the use of compact, resource-efficient AI systems, including fine-tuned language models, computer vision applications, and decision-support tools, that can be deployed on modest hardware, in contexts with limited connectivity, and for specific development applications such as crop disease detection, maternal health triage, or educational assessment.[9] The conceptual significance of Small AI lies in its reframing of the AI development challenge for the Global South: rather than asking how developing countries can catch up with the frontier of foundation model development, it asks how AI can be adapted to serve development objectives within the constraints that define the reality of most developing-country contexts. This framing has practical implications for governance: if the relevant AI systems for development are small, context-specific, and locally deployed, then the governance frameworks needed to manage them can be correspondingly lean, agile, and locally designed, rather than requiring the complex, resource-intensive regulatory architectures that the EU AI Act and similar Northern frameworks demand. [9][25]

5.2 The ITU AI for Good Impact Framework

The International Telecommunication Union's AI for Good programme, which held its annual summit in Geneva in 2025 with participation from 118 countries, has evolved from a platform for showcasing AI applications to a framework for measuring AI's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.[26] The AI for Good Impact Report 2025 introduced a set of impact metrics designed to assess the extent to which AI deployments in developing countries were achieving measurable development outcomes, as distinct from mere technological deployment. The framework distinguishes between output indicators, such as the number of AI systems deployed in a given sector, and outcome indicators, such as the improvement in agricultural yields, health system efficiency, or educational attainment attributable to AI adoption. This distinction is critical for the Global South, where the risk of technological solutionism, the deployment of AI systems that are technically impressive but developmentally irrelevant, is particularly acute in contexts where institutional capacity for needs assessment and impact evaluation is limited.[26]

5.3 Regional Strategies: AU Continental AI Strategy and ASEAN Roadmap

The two most developed regional AI strategies in the Global South, the African Union's Continental AI Strategy and ASEAN's Responsible AI Roadmap 2025 to 2030, illustrate the range of approaches that developing-country regional organisations have adopted in the post-Compact period. The AU Strategy, with its explicit framing of AI as a tool for advancing Agenda 2063 and its seven designated growth areas spanning health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, and the creative industries, represents the most comprehensive attempt by a developing-country regional organisation to articulate a vision for AI that is grounded in regional development priorities rather than in Northern risk frameworks.[20] Its implementation mechanisms, including national AI research centres, regional centres of excellence, and a pan-African AI governance coordination platform, reflect an awareness that the governance capacity gap cannot be addressed at the national level alone but requires regional cooperation and pooling of scarce expertise and resources. Figure 9 compares the two regional strategies along five analytical dimensions.

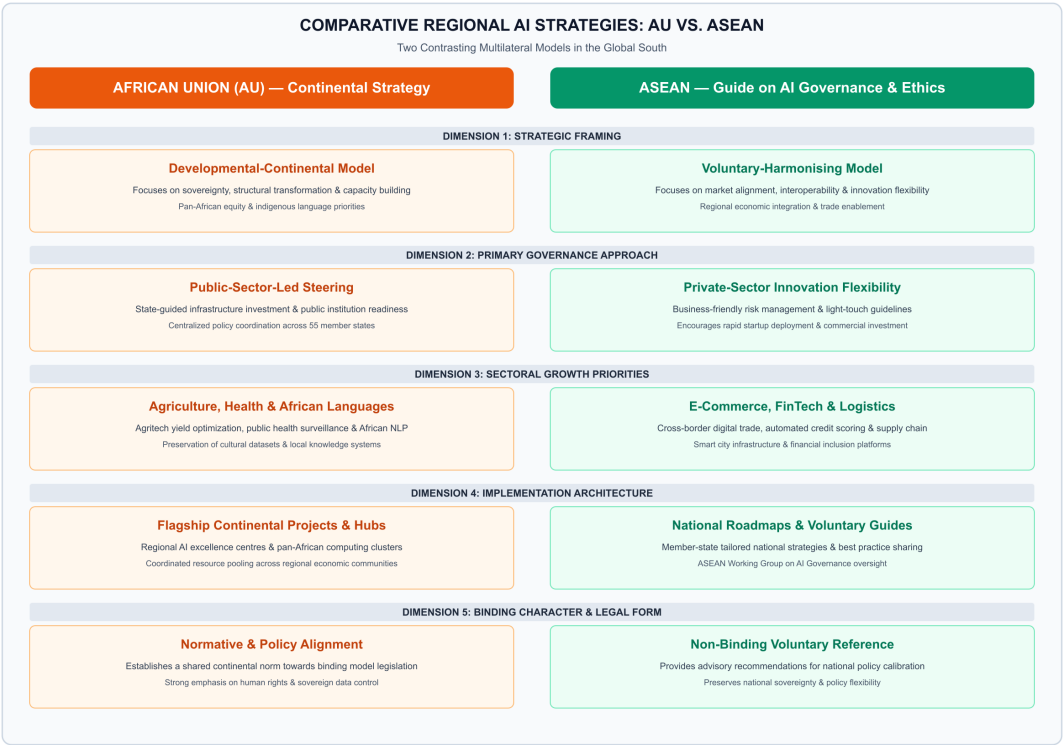


Figure 9. Comparative Regional AI Strategies: AU vs. ASEAN. Two contrasting models—a developmental-continental approach (AU) and a voluntary-harmonising approach (ASEAN)—illustrate the range of strategies available to Global South regional organisations.

ASEAN’s Responsible AI Roadmap, by contrast, reflects the bloc’s tradition of consensus-based, non-binding cooperation. Its emphasis on voluntary guidelines, regulatory sandboxes, and gradual harmonisation of national approaches accommodates the significant disparities in AI capacity among ASEAN Member States, ranging from Singapore, which ranks among the world leaders in AI governance, to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Cambodia, where AI policy is still in its earliest stages.[21] The roadmap’s value lies not in its prescriptive ambition but in its pragmatic recognition that effective AI governance in a diverse regional context requires flexibility, peer learning, and incremental norm development rather than the imposition of uniform standards. For the Global Digital Compact’s implementation, these regional models offer complementary lessons: the AU’s experience demonstrates the potential of ambitious, development-oriented regional strategies, while ASEAN’s approach shows how governance cooperation can advance even in the absence of binding commitments, provided that the institutional framework is inclusive and adaptive.[20][21]

6. Reflexive Governance: Practicing What You Publish

6.1 The Reflexive Turn in AI Governance Scholarship

The concept of reflexive governance has a substantial lineage in social theory and public administration, but its application to AI governance is both recent and particularly apt. At its core, reflexive governance refers to a mode of governance in which the governors explicitly account for the ways in which their own governance practices, assumptions, and institutional arrangements shape the outcomes they seek to influence.[27] In the environmental domain, the concept has been used to describe governance approaches that acknowledge the complexity and unpredictability of socio-ecological systems and that design institutions capable of learning and adapting in response to emerging evidence. In the AI governance domain, reflexivity takes on an additional dimension: the technologies being governed are themselves being used by the governors, creating a feedback loop in which the act of governing AI is simultaneously shaped by and dependent on the use of AI.

A 2026 paper published in *Ambio*, the journal of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, proposed a framework for “reflexive AI governance for transformative sustainability” that treats AI not merely as an object of governance but as a socio-technical assemblage that shapes the governance process itself.[7] The paper argued that the dominant modes of AI governance discourse, whether prescriptive regulation from governments, risk frameworks from technical standardisation bodies, or ethical guidelines from academic philosophers, all shared a common limitation: they treated AI governance as an external activity directed at an independent object, rather than as an embedded practice in which the governance and the governed were co-constituted. A reflexive approach, by contrast, would require governance actors to examine and disclose how their own use of AI influences their understanding of AI’s risks and benefits, their capacity to govern it effectively, and their credibility in advocating for particular governance arrangements.[7] Figure 10 depicts the reflexive governance cycle through which this practice-grounded evidence is generated.

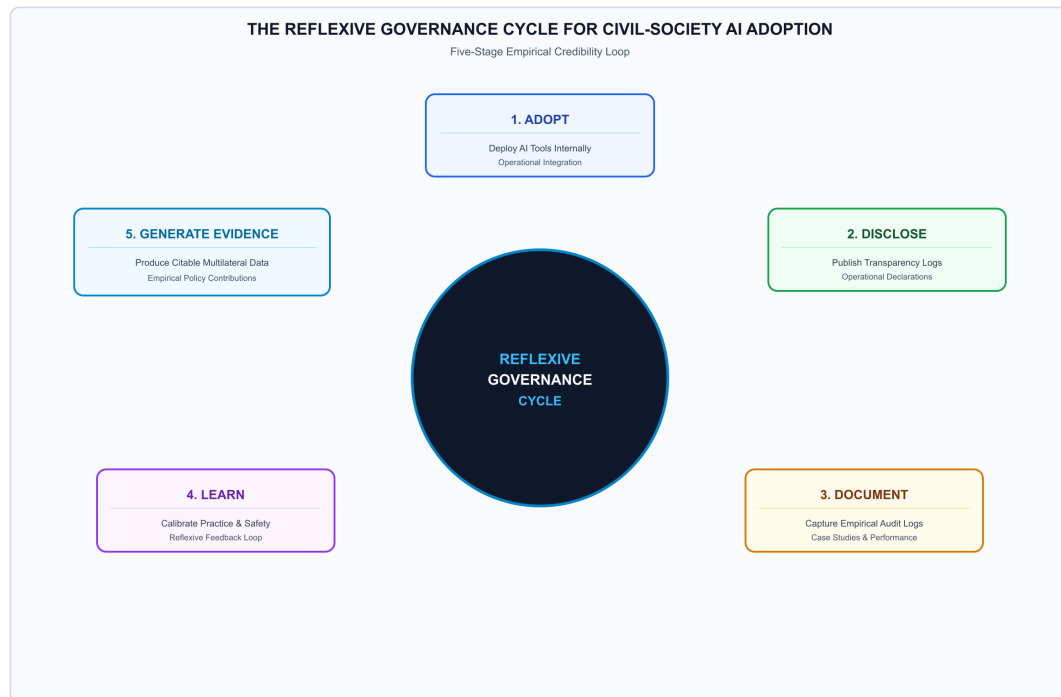


Figure 10. The Reflexive Governance Cycle for Civil-Society AI Adoption. The cycle—adopt, disclose, document, learn, generate evidence—produces a form of credibility that theoretical prescriptions cannot match.

6.2 AUN Digital as a Case Study: Transparent AI Adoption in Civil Society

The reflexive governance framework is not merely theoretical. AUN Digital has, over the course of 2025 and 2026, integrated AI tools into multiple aspects of its research, advocacy, and operational workflows. The organisation's digital toolkit, which includes the AdvocacyOS platform for campaign management, the PolicyPulse AI system for legislative monitoring and analysis, and the SDG Impact Mapper for tracking national implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, represents a deliberate and transparent adoption of AI capabilities in pursuit of the organisation's mission of evidence-based advocacy for the Global South.[28] The adoption has not been without challenges. The integration of AI into research workflows has required careful attention to questions of accuracy, attribution, and the appropriate boundary between AI-assisted and human-authored analysis. The use of AI in policy monitoring has raised questions about the representativeness of the data on which AI models are trained and the potential for algorithmic bias to distort the organisation's understanding of policy developments in the countries it covers. Figure 11 presents the architecture of the AUN Digital ecosystem and its reflexive outputs.

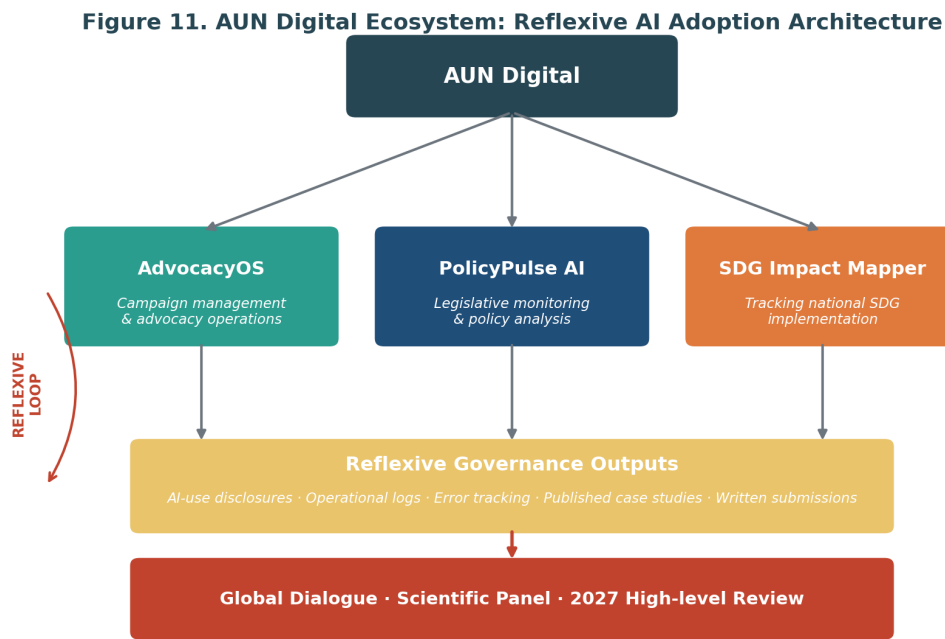


Figure 11. AUN Digital Ecosystem: Reflexive AI Adoption Architecture. Three platforms (AdvocacyOS, PolicyPulse AI, SDG Impact Mapper) feed a reflexive layer of disclosures, operational logs, and case studies that inform multilateral governance processes.

What distinguishes AUN Digital’s approach from the routine AI adoption occurring across the civil-society sector is the explicit decision to treat that adoption as a research object in its own right. Rather than deploying AI tools quietly and benefiting from the efficiencies they provide without disclosing the role of AI in its work, AUN Digital has committed to documenting and publishing its AI adoption practices, including the specific tools used, the workflows in which they are deployed, the safeguards that have been established to ensure accuracy and accountability, and the lessons learned from the experience. This commitment to transparency is not merely an ethical posture; it is a methodological strategy that transforms the organisation’s operational experience into a form of evidence that is directly relevant to the AI governance debate and that would not otherwise exist.[7][28] The evidence is particularly valuable because it is generated in a civil-society context, where the constraints on AI adoption, limited technical infrastructure, modest budgets, small teams, and the imperative to maintain public trust and credibility, are very different from those that prevail in the private-sector or government contexts that dominate the AI governance literature.

6.3 Disclosure, Human Accountability, and the Reflexive Advantage

The Reflexive Governance Framework proposed in this report is organised around four principles: disclosure, human accountability, contextual documentation, and public learning. Disclosure requires that

organisations explicitly identify which aspects of their research, analysis, and communication are AI-assisted and which are the product of human judgment and expertise. Human accountability mandates that a named individual bears professional responsibility for every published output, regardless of the extent of AI involvement in its production. Contextual documentation requires organisations to record not only what AI tools they use but how those tools perform in their specific operational context, including the limitations, errors, and unexpected behaviours that they observe. Public learning commits organisations to share their experiences, both positive and negative, through published reports, case studies, and contributions to multilateral processes.[7][27]

The reflexive advantage, as this report terms it, lies in the credibility that this approach generates. In a policy environment in which AI governance is predominantly debated in theoretical terms, an organisation that can say, “Here is how we adopted AI responsibly, here is what we learned, and here is what we would do differently,” brings a form of evidence that theoretical prescriptions cannot match. This is particularly valuable for the Global South, where the dominant modes of AI governance discourse are either abstract principles devised in Northern academic contexts or regulatory models transplanted from Northern jurisdictions, and where the need for practice-grounded, contextually specific evidence about responsible AI adoption is both acute and largely unmet. Table 2 presents the Reflexive Governance Framework as a structured set of dimensions, principles, and implementation practices.

Dimension	Principle	Implementation Practice	Governance Contribution
Transparency	Disclosure of AI use in all published outputs	AI-use statements in reports, methodology sections, and public communications	Builds public trust; provides evidence base for governance standards
Accountability	Named human responsibility for every output	Authorship protocols, editorial oversight, human review of all AI-assisted analysis	Demonstrates feasibility of human-in-the-loop governance in resource-constrained settings
Documentation	Systematic recording of AI performance in context	Operational logs, error tracking, comparative analysis of AI-assisted vs. manual processes	Generates practice-grounded evidence about AI capabilities and limitations in development contexts
Learning	Open sharing of positive and negative experiences	Published case studies, contributions to multilateral processes, peer-learning networks	Enables collective knowledge-building across the civil-society sector
Reflexivity	Examination of how AI use shapes governance positions	Periodic self-assessment, external review, integration of reflexive analysis into research outputs	Models the governance-introspection that multilateral frameworks advocate but rarely practise

Table 2. Reflexive Governance Framework for Civil-Society AI Adoption

6.4 Toward a Reflexive Governance Standard for CSOs

The framework proposed in this section is offered not as a definitive standard but as a starting point for a broader conversation within the civil-society sector about the governance implications of AI adoption.

The immediate practical objective is to establish a set of practices that AUN Digital and other civil-society organisations can adopt in their own operations and that can serve as the basis for a written contribution to the Global Dialogue process. The longer-term objective is to contribute to the development of a sector-wide standard for responsible AI use in civil-society research and advocacy, one that is calibrated to the specific constraints and opportunities of civil-society contexts rather than borrowed from the regulatory frameworks designed for technology companies or government agencies.[7] Such a standard would have several distinctive features. It would be voluntary and self-imposed rather than mandated by regulation, reflecting the civil-society sector's tradition of self-regulation and its legitimate interest in preserving the flexibility and independence that enable it to fulfil its watchdog and advocacy functions. It would be process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented, focusing on the governance practices that organisations adopt rather than on the specific AI systems they deploy, recognising that the technology landscape changes rapidly and that governance frameworks tied to specific technologies risk becoming obsolete. And it would be reflexive in the sense defined above, requiring organisations not only to govern their AI use but to reflect publicly on how that governance shapes their understanding of AI and their advocacy for AI governance reform.[27][28]

7. The Road to 2027: Written Contributions and Strategic Positioning

7.1 The Global Dialogue Partnerships Hub and Written Submissions

The Global Dialogue's first session in July 2026 established a precedent and a template for the engagement that civil-society organisations can expect in the lead-up to the 2027 high-level review. The Dialogue's acceptance of written submissions, which attracted more than fifteen hundred contributions in its inaugural round, represents a significant opportunity for organisations with research capacity and policy expertise to influence the normative development of the Compact's implementation.[16] The Partnerships Hub, which facilitated the submission of capacity-building partnership proposals during the six weeks preceding the July session, provides a parallel channel through which organisations can propose concrete initiatives for bridging the AI divide, connecting the analytical work of indices and frameworks with the operational work of capacity-building and technical assistance.[16][17]

For AUN, the strategic imperative is to use the period between August 2026 and the 2027 Global Dialogue in New York to prepare and submit a written contribution that leverages the organisation's distinctive evidence base. That evidence base includes, in the first instance, the CyberSec Journal's accumulated body of research on digital governance, encompassing the 2024 Digital Governance Readiness Matrix, the 2025 GDC Governance Index, and the present report's Reflexive Governance Framework. In the second instance, it includes AUN Digital's operational experience as a civil-society organisation that is actively adopting AI tools in its research and advocacy workflows, an experience that, when documented and analysed through

the reflexive governance lens, generates a form of evidence about responsible AI adoption in development contexts that is unavailable from any other source. The written contribution should be framed as an evidence-based policy input to the Global Dialogue process, drawing on these two bodies of evidence to propose specific recommendations for strengthening the Compact’s implementation in ways that prioritise Global South capacity and voice.[3][23][28] Figure 12 maps the strategic roadmap and the three objectives that structure AUN’s positioning in the lead-up to 2027.



Figure 12. Strategic Roadmap to the 2027 High-Level Review. Three strategic objectives—presenting the GDC Governance Index, submitting the Reflexive Governance Framework, and proposing concrete recommendations—structure AUN’s positioning in the window between August 2026 and the General Assembly’s eighty-second session.

7.2 AUN’s Written Submission: Scope and Strategic Objectives

AUN’s planned written submission to the Global Dialogue process should pursue three strategic objectives. The first is to present the GDC Governance Index as a candidate measurement framework for the 2027 high-level review, arguing that the existing fragmentation of the measurement landscape necessitates a unified instrument specifically designed to assess Compact implementation and that the Index’s comprehensive coverage of all five Compact pillars, combined with its disaggregated, diagnostic design, makes it the most suitable available tool for this purpose.[23] The submission should include preliminary results from the Index’s pilot application, demonstrating its ability to identify both progress and persistent gaps across different dimensions of implementation. The second objective is to introduce the Reflexive Governance Framework as a practical contribution to the broader debate on AI governance standards,

arguing that civil-society organisations that model responsible AI use generate a form of evidence that complements and enriches the more theoretical and regulatory contributions of governments, multilateral institutions, and the private sector.[7][27] The submission should include case-study material from AUN Digital's own experience, illustrating how the framework's four principles, disclosure, accountability, documentation, and learning, operate in practice.

The third strategic objective is to propose a set of concrete recommendations for the 2027 high-level review. These recommendations should be grounded in the evidence presented in the first two parts of the submission and should address the specific governance gaps and implementation challenges identified in the CyberSec Journal's research. They should include, at minimum, the establishment of a permanent measurement mechanism for tracking GDC implementation, the creation of a dedicated capacity-building fund for Global South AI governance, linked to the Compact's implementation architecture, the adoption of reflexive governance standards as a condition for civil-society participation in Global Dialogue processes, and the strengthening of regional coordination mechanisms to enable more effective collective engagement by developing countries in the institutions established by the Compact.[3][14][18] The submission should be timed to maximise its influence on the preparatory process for the 2027 session, taking into account the likely timeline for the compilation and synthesis of written contributions that ODET and the Global Dialogue secretariat will produce in advance of the high-level review.

7.3 Building Coalitions for the 2027 High-Level Review

The 2027 high-level review will be shaped not only by written submissions but by the coalitions and alliances that civil-society organisations are able to build in the intervening period. AUN's positioning strategy should be informed by three considerations. First, the review will take place at the eighty-second session of the General Assembly, which means that the political dynamics of intergovernmental negotiation, including the positions and alliances of key member states, will be as important as the quality of the evidence and analysis that civil-society organisations provide. Building relationships with sympathetic delegations, particularly from the Group of 77 and China, the African Group, and the Like-Minded Group of Developing Countries, will be essential for ensuring that civil-society evidence and recommendations receive a hearing in the formal review process.[15] Second, the review will benefit from the existence of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, whose assessment, expected to be published in advance of the review, will provide an authoritative evidentiary foundation. AUN should seek to engage with the Panel's work, both through formal submissions and through informal engagement with Panel members, to ensure that the Panel's assessment reflects the perspectives and evidence that the CyberSec Journal's research has generated.[18] Third, the cyber-security dimensions of the Compact, which are addressed by the third pillar but have received less attention in the post-adoption implementation debate than the

AI governance dimensions, remain critical for developing countries, and AUN should work with partners in the digital-rights and cyber-security communities to ensure that these dimensions are adequately addressed in the review.[3]

8. Counterarguments and Limitations

The reflexive governance framework proposed in this report is subject to several important limitations and counterarguments that merit explicit acknowledgment. First, the concept of reflexive governance may be criticised as self-referential, privileging the governance experiences of civil-society organisations over the more consequential governance decisions made by governments and technology companies. The impact of AUN Digital's adoption of AI tools on its own operations, however well-documented, is of a different order of magnitude from the impact of the European Union's AI Act on the global technology industry or from the impact of China's AI governance framework on the surveillance and control of its population. A sceptic might argue that the reflexive advantage, while conceptually elegant, is practically marginal, and that the resources devoted to documenting civil-society AI adoption would be better invested in direct advocacy for stronger regulatory frameworks, greater public investment in connectivity, or more ambitious technology-transfer commitments from developed countries. This critique has force, and the report does not claim that reflexive governance is a substitute for these more traditional forms of advocacy. Rather, it argues that reflexive governance is a complement, one that provides a distinctive form of evidence and credibility that enhances the effectiveness of traditional advocacy by grounding it in demonstrated practice.[7][27] Second, the framework may be criticised for its reliance on voluntary self-regulation. The four principles of disclosure, accountability, documentation, and learning are, by design, self-imposed rather than externally enforced. There is no mechanism to ensure that organisations that claim to adhere to the framework actually do so, and no sanction for organisations that adopt the language of reflexive governance without implementing its substance. This is a legitimate concern, but it is a limitation shared by all voluntary governance standards, from the Global Reporting Initiative to the ISO 26000 guidance on social responsibility, and it does not negate the value of having a clearly articulated standard that organisations can voluntarily adopt and that can serve as a benchmark for evaluation by peers, funders, and the multilateral institutions to which civil-society organisations contribute.[27] Moreover, the voluntary character of the framework is, in the civil-society context, a feature rather than a bug: a mandatory standard imposed by governments or international organisations on civil-society AI use would raise serious concerns about independence and freedom of expression, and would be inconsistent with the sector's role as a critic and watchdog of governmental and corporate power. Third, the report's forward-looking analysis of the 2027 high-level review is necessarily speculative. The political dynamics of the General Assembly, the composition and priorities of the key institutional actors,

and the broader geopolitical context in which the review will take place are all uncertain and may change in ways that render the strategic recommendations in Section 7 outdated or irrelevant. The report's recommendations are therefore offered as conditional guidance, contingent on the assumption that the institutional architecture established by the Compact remains substantially intact through 2027 and that the political will to conduct a meaningful high-level review continues to exist. Both assumptions are reasonable but neither is guaranteed, and AUN's strategy should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in the institutional and political landscape.[15][18]

Fourth, the report's treatment of the Global South as a meaningful analytical category, while conventional in development studies and global governance scholarship, risks obscuring the enormous diversity within the grouping. The governance capacity of Singapore is not comparable to that of South Sudan, and the AI adoption experiences of India, with its massive domestic technology sector and sophisticated digital public infrastructure, are very different from those of a small island developing state with limited human capital and fragile digital infrastructure. The frameworks and recommendations in this report are intended to be adaptable to diverse contexts, but the extent to which they can be meaningfully applied across the full range of developing-country settings will depend on local adaptation and on the development of context-specific case studies that the framework's documentation and learning principles are designed to generate. [5][9]

9. Conclusion

Two years into the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, the central challenge facing the multilateral digital governance system is not a deficit of institutional architecture but a deficit of equitable participation and credible evidence. The institutions established by the Compact, ODET, the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, exist and are functioning, but their capacity to deliver on the Compact's promise of inclusive, development-oriented digital governance is constrained by the persistent and, in some dimensions, widening gap between the governance capacity of the Global North and the Global South. The AI divide, measured by the Global AI Readiness Index at two-to-one in composite governance scores, is not a peripheral concern but a structural condition that shapes every aspect of the Compact's implementation, from the composition of expert panels to the substance of written submissions to the design of capacity-building partnerships.[5][6][12]

This report has argued that addressing the AI divide requires not only new measurement instruments and capacity-building programmes, essential as those are, but a fundamental shift in how civil-society organisations participate in and contribute to the AI governance debate. The Reflexive Governance Framework proposed in Section 6 offers a mechanism for generating a form of evidence, practice-grounded, contextually specific, and produced by organisations operating under the same constraints as the communities

they serve, that complements and enriches the theoretical, regulatory, and technical contributions of other governance actors. AUN Digital's own adoption of AI tools, documented through the framework's four principles of disclosure, accountability, documentation, and learning, demonstrates that the reflexive approach is not merely theoretical but operationally feasible, and that it generates insights of direct relevance to the Global South's engagement with the Compact's implementation.[7][27][28]

The forward runway to the 2027 Global Dialogue and the high-level review of the Compact at the eighty-second session of the General Assembly provides a clear strategic target. The CyberSec Journal's accumulated research, the GDC Governance Index, and the Reflexive Governance Framework together constitute an evidence base that positions AUN to make a substantive written contribution to the Global Dialogue process and to advocate, with credibility grounded in practice, for a high-level review that centres the perspectives, priorities, and capacities of the Global South. The Compact was written in New York. Making it deliver for the Global South requires evidence from the Global South. AUN Digital and the CyberSec Journal are committed to providing it.

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