

*Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool: Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into its Technical Architecture*

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**Kariuki Muigua**

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**Table of Contents**

Abstract.....	3
1.0 Introduction .....	3
2.0 Risks and Concerns with Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool .....	4
3.0 Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into AI for Good Governance.....	6
4.0 Conclusion.....	8
References.....	9

**Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool?: Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into its Technical Architecture**

**Kariuki Muigua\***

**Abstract**

*This paper discusses how AI can be effectively harnessed as a governance tool. The paper notes that AI has emerged as powerful and appropriate tool that is improving governance in both public and private entities. Despite its suitability as a governance tool, the paper observes that risks and challenges in AI can undermine good governance. The paper examines underlying risks and challenges in AI and their impact on governance. In light of these concerns, the paper posits that it is imperative to adopt AI as a governance tool by harnessing its positive attributes while addressing risks and challenges. In order to actualise this ideal, the paper examines how social justice, equality and human rights can be incorporated into AI's technical architecture towards good governance.*

**1.0 Introduction**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful tool that is revolutionizing governance in both public and private spheres. For example, it has been observed that the adoption of AI can help both public and private entities to automate services, reduce operation costs, improve decision-making and enhance customer experience towards good governance<sup>1</sup>. In particular, AI is helping governments automate and tailor public services, improve decision-making processes, detect fraud, and enrich civil servants' work and learning<sup>2</sup>. In addition, it has been observed that in the private sector, AI is an enabler of transparent, responsible, and faster governance processes<sup>3</sup>. AI technologies including machine learning, predictive analytics, natural language processing, and automated decision engines are supporting decision-makers in interpreting data, assessing internal and external risks, improving compliance with laws and regulations, and strengthening internal controls<sup>4</sup>.

AI is therefore an important governance tool. It has been observed that AI is reshaping and improving governance models by bringing automation, accuracy, risk analysis, monitoring and predictive capabilities into areas previously dominated by manual judgment<sup>5</sup>. AI tools and systems are capable of performing tasks that would have usually required human intelligence in a more expeditious, cost-effective and

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<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development., 'Governing with Artificial Intelligence' Available at [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/06/governing-with-artificial-intelligence\\_398fa287.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/06/governing-with-artificial-intelligence_398fa287.html) (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Role of AI in Corporate Governance and Board Oversight., Available at <https://www.euromatech.com/articles/role-of-ai-in-corporate-governance-and-board-oversight/> (Accessed on 24/03/2026)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

## ***Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool: Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into its Technical Architecture***

accurate manner thus improving governance processes and outcomes<sup>6</sup>. It has been observed that due to its exposure and ability to analyze and interpret vast amounts of data, AI is enabling sound decision-making processes in both public and private entities<sup>7</sup>. Consequently, AI tools and systems are being increasingly adopted across many sectors including education, transportation, agriculture, finance, data storage, communications, healthcare, environmental governance, dispute resolution and law enforcement among others towards good governance<sup>8</sup>.

Adopting AI can therefore strengthen governance processes and outcomes in both public and private entities. However, it has also been pointed out that effective governance through AI relies on managing its risks including skewed and biased data, inadequate transparency and accountability, digital divides, errors and the potential for human right violations<sup>9</sup>. Addressing these among other challenges is vital towards harnessing AI towards good governance in both public and private realms.

This paper discusses how AI can be effectively harnessed as a governance tool. The paper notes that AI has emerged as powerful and appropriate tool that is improving governance in both public and private entities. Despite its suitability as a governance tool, the paper observes that risks and challenges in AI can undermine good governance. The paper examines underlying risks and challenges in AI and their impact on governance. In light of these concerns, the paper posits that it is imperative to adopt AI as a governance tool by harnessing its positive attributes while addressing risks and challenges. In order to actualise this ideal, the paper examines how social justice, equality and human rights can be incorporated into AI's technical architecture towards good governance.

### **2.0 Risks and Concerns with Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool**

AI provides numerous benefits that can improve governance. It has the ability to support automation, streamline and tailor services to suit specific needs, enhance decision-making through its predictive capabilities and enable public and private entities to detect and manage risks<sup>10</sup>. The integration of AI into governance has been described as a transformative approach towards enhancing public administration and service delivery<sup>11</sup>. Harnessing AI as a governance tool can also support policy development through data-driven insights and solutions<sup>12</sup>. In addition, it has been observed that the increased application of AI tools and systems in key sectors such as environmental management, law enforcement, access to justice,

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<sup>6</sup> World Economic Forum., 'What is artificial intelligence—and what is it not?' Available at [https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/03/what-is-artificial-intelligence-and-what-is-it-not-ai-machine-learning/?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=22228224717&gbraid=0AAAAAoVy5F5jTUoRGlo\\_LxcQJ9TwsXjbc&gclid=CjwKCAiAtLyMBhB\\_EiwA1u6\\_PraoTdn4Xiw0qd0wOtbuSLspiezKQHxFaaInYRTiVa17U2O4losATh0CbqUQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/03/what-is-artificial-intelligence-and-what-is-it-not-ai-machine-learning/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22228224717&gbraid=0AAAAAoVy5F5jTUoRGlo_LxcQJ9TwsXjbc&gclid=CjwKCAiAtLyMBhB_EiwA1u6_PraoTdn4Xiw0qd0wOtbuSLspiezKQHxFaaInYRTiVa17U2O4losATh0CbqUQAvD_BwE) (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>7</sup> Artificial intelligence (AI): a simple-to-understand guide., Available at <https://cloud.google.com/learn/what-is-artificial-intelligence> (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>8</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development., 'Governing with Artificial Intelligence' Op Cit

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development., 'Governing with Artificial Intelligence' Op Cit

<sup>11</sup> Artificial Intelligence in Governance: Opportunities and Challenges., Available at [https://sleepyclasses.com/artificial-intelligence-in-governance/#:~:text=Artificial%20Intelligence%20\(AI\)%20in%20governance%20is%20a,%20\\*\\*Tailoring%20public%20services%20to%20individual%20needs\\*\\*](https://sleepyclasses.com/artificial-intelligence-in-governance/#:~:text=Artificial%20Intelligence%20(AI)%20in%20governance%20is%20a,%20**Tailoring%20public%20services%20to%20individual%20needs**) (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

## ***Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool: Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into its Technical Architecture***

education, healthcare and finance is improving governance outcomes through efficiency, speed, accessibility and cost-reduction<sup>13</sup>.

Despite its role as a governance tool, the adoption of AI fuels several risks and concerns that can undermine the efficacy of governance processes and outcomes. For example, it has been observed that algorithmic biases can violate equality and human rights<sup>14</sup>. Algorithmic decision-making is being widely applied in many sectors including finance, healthcare, hiring, criminal justice and environmental management in order to improve governance outcomes<sup>15</sup>. However, since algorithmic decision-making relies on training data, it has been observed that inaccurate, biased and incomplete data sets have led to inequalities, discrimination and human rights violations against disadvantaged groups including women and people of colour<sup>16</sup>. This is evidenced by instances such as credit ratings and financial eligibility tools that discriminate on the basis of race, sex, colour or ethnicity, hiring systems that are biased in terms of gender, race and colour, and law enforcement tools that lead to mass surveillance and racial profiling<sup>17</sup>. It has been pointed out that the use of biased AI tools in key areas such as criminal justice, healthcare and hiring can lead to unfair and unjust outcomes that violate equality and human rights<sup>18</sup>.

Adopting AI as a governance tool also raises transparency and accountability concerns. For instance, it has been observed that algorithmic decision-making through AI makes it difficult to understand how decisions are made undermining transparency and accountability which are fundamental tenets of good governance<sup>19</sup>. Lack of inclusivity in the design of AI models and systems often leads to distrust with many people not fully aware about how these models and systems are trained and how they determine outcomes<sup>20</sup>. It has been pointed out that the ethical deployment of AI systems in governance depends on their transparency and explainability<sup>21</sup>. Further, accountability is key towards ensuring that AI tools and

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<sup>13</sup> Harnessing AI for Governance., Available at <https://www.drishtiiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-editorials/harnessing-ai-for-governance#:~:text=Enhancing%20Policy%20Formulation%20and%20Assist.%2C%20ensuring%20informed%20decision%20making>. (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>14</sup> World Economic Forum., 'Bias in AI is a real problem. Here's what we should do about it' Available at [https://www.weforum.org/stories/2018/09/the-biggest-risk-of-ai-youve-never-heard-of/?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=22228224717&gbraid=0AAAAoVy5F5407WzLhR-\\_JJUz3kA\\_c95W&gclid=CjwKCAjwqazPBhALEiwAOuXqdPIA2HOlWpBdAMhSmcGRvSql8wOAEI VnEHRU0Ay\\_p-qT6JcFUhD8dlhoCcYkQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.weforum.org/stories/2018/09/the-biggest-risk-of-ai-youve-never-heard-of/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22228224717&gbraid=0AAAAoVy5F5407WzLhR-_JJUz3kA_c95W&gclid=CjwKCAjwqazPBhALEiwAOuXqdPIA2HOlWpBdAMhSmcGRvSql8wOAEI VnEHRU0Ay_p-qT6JcFUhD8dlhoCcYkQAvD_BwE) (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>15</sup> European Parliament., 'Understanding Algorithmic Decision-Making: Opportunities and Challenges' Available at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624261/EPRS\\_STU\(2019\)624261\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624261/EPRS_STU(2019)624261_EN.pdf) (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>16</sup> World Economic Forum., 'Bias in AI is a real problem. Here's what we should do about it' Op Cit

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> What is Algorithmic Bias?., Available at <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/algorithmic-bias> (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>19</sup> Burgess. P., 'AI and the Rule of Law' Available at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/ai-and-the-rule-of-law-9781509963171/> (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>20</sup> What is AI Transparency?., Available at <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/ai-transparency#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20building%20trust,worry%20less%20about%20AI%20reliability>. (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization., 'The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence' Available at <https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics> (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

## ***Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool: Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into its Technical Architecture***

systems are fair, reasonable and free from bias towards upholding human rights<sup>22</sup>. Ensuring transparency and accountability is therefore key towards appropriately harnessing AI as a governance tool.

In addition, the use of AI as a governance tool can potentially undermine social justice. According to the United Nations, social justice is a concept that ensures that all societies are based on the principles of equality and solidarity, understand and value human rights, and recognise the dignity of every human being<sup>23</sup>. Social justice involves promoting just, fair, equal and inclusive societies by challenging injustice and valuing diversity<sup>24</sup>. Social justice has been described as the foundation of peaceful societies that are equitable, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient<sup>25</sup>.

The current architecture of AI can violate the fundamental tenets of social justice. For example, the digital divide prevents developing countries and vulnerable groups such as women, the poor, the elderly and indigenous and local communities from effectively adopting AI thus undermining social justice<sup>26</sup>. In addition, the domination of digital ecosystems by technology companies from the Global North contributes to digital colonialism through the appropriation of data and deployment of digital tools to the Global South without modification to local needs and cultural contexts undermining justice and equality<sup>27</sup>. Further, it has been observed that if not appropriately and ethically harnessed, AI can violate indigenous data sovereignty including through extraction and commodification of indigenous data without the meaningful involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities undermining the ideal of just, equal, fair and inclusive societies as enshrined under the ideal of social justice<sup>28</sup>. Incorporating social justice into AI is therefore necessary towards building fair, just, equal and inclusive societies that uphold human rights for all.

### **3.0 Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into AI for Good Governance**

AI provides tremendous opportunities to improve governance processes and outcomes in both public and private spheres. However, risks and concerns in AI including algorithmic biases, inequalities perpetuated

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<sup>22</sup> World Economic Forum., 'This is how we can hold AI accountable' Available at [https://www.weforum.org/stories/2018/05/the-ethics-of-ai-how-to-hold-machines-accountable/?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=22228224717&gbraid=0AAAAAoVy5F5407WzLhR-\\_lJUz3kA\\_c95W&gclid=CjwKCAjwqazPBhALEiwAOuXqdODmG-L\\_5j8BHrukraqAq42LA30WP7juNFZ9T\\_Jqt7woYccrXrGqmYhoCwHwQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.weforum.org/stories/2018/05/the-ethics-of-ai-how-to-hold-machines-accountable/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22228224717&gbraid=0AAAAAoVy5F5407WzLhR-_lJUz3kA_c95W&gclid=CjwKCAjwqazPBhALEiwAOuXqdODmG-L_5j8BHrukraqAq42LA30WP7juNFZ9T_Jqt7woYccrXrGqmYhoCwHwQAvD_BwE) (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>23</sup> United Nations., 'What is social justice and how is the UN helping make it a reality?' Available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1160301> (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>24</sup> What is Social Justice? Origins and Definitions, Plus Social Injustice Examples., Available at <https://insights.taylorandfrancis.com/social-justice/what-is-social-justice/> (Accessed on 24/03/2026)

<sup>25</sup> International Labour Organization., 'Social Justice' Available at <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/social-justice> (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>26</sup> United Nations University., 'Examining the Causes and Consequences of the Digital Divide(s)' Available at <https://unu.edu/merit/blog-post/examining-causes-and-consequences-digital-divides> (Accessed on 24/04/2024)

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization., 'Addressing digital colonialism: A path to equitable data governance' Available at <https://community.unesco.org/inclusivepolicylab/s/thinkpiece/addressing-digital-colonialism-a-path-to-equitable-data-governance-MCIIJ2OCE56JB5ZCY2ZY4M7AZUYE> (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

<sup>28</sup> Perera. M et al., 'Indigenous peoples and artificial intelligence: A systematic review and future directions' Available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20539517251349170#:~:text=Abstract,Discuss%20literature%20under%20each%20category> (Accessed on 24/04/2026)

## ***Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool: Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into its Technical Architecture***

by the digital divide, inadequate transparency and accountability measures and digital colonialism can undermine the fundamental tenets of good governance. Harnessing its advantages while addressing its risks and concerns is therefore a key agenda towards strengthening AI as a governance tool towards Sustainable Development.

In order to effectively embrace AI as a governance tool, there is need to incorporate social justice into its technical architecture. It has been observed that risks and challenges such as algorithmic biases, racial profiling, discrimination and exclusion, digital colonialism and breach of indigenous data sovereignty undermine the quest towards social justice which envisions fair, equal, inclusive and just societies where human rights are upheld<sup>29</sup>. Incorporating social justice into AI's technical architecture is therefore key towards addressing inequalities, discrimination and injustices against vulnerable groups including people of colour, women and indigenous and local communities<sup>30</sup>. In order to achieve this goal, it is imperative to ensure inclusivity and diversity in the development and deployment of AI tools and systems<sup>31</sup>. In addition, it has been observed that strengthening transparency, accountability and explainability is vital towards ensuring that algorithmic decision-making through AI does not perpetuate social injustices<sup>32</sup>.

Upholding equality in AI's technical architecture is also key towards enhancing its role as a governance tool. In particular, it has been observed that involving the Global South in the development and deployment of AI tools and systems can ensure equality by addressing risks including algorithmic biases and discrimination<sup>33</sup>. Further, it has been observed that involving indigenous peoples and local communities in the design and implementation of AI models that rely on indigenous data is vital towards upholding equality by addressing digital colonialism and breach of indigenous data sovereignty<sup>34</sup>. In addition, ensuring that women are represented equally in both the design and deployment of AI is vital towards tackling gender discrimination and inequalities in algorithmic decision-making<sup>35</sup>.

In addition, there is need to integrate human rights into AI's technical architecture. It has been observed that in order to ensure that AI is ethically and appropriately harnessed, respect, protection and promotion of human rights and dignity as established by international law, including international human rights law should be a key priority throughout the life cycle of AI tools and systems<sup>36</sup>. This requires AI systems to be developed and trained on inclusive data sets that embrace racial, cultural, gender and religious diversity in order to be free from bias and discrimination that fuel human right violations<sup>37</sup>. Ensuring oversight and audit of AI tools and systems is also key towards identifying and remedying the risk

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<sup>29</sup> AI and Social Justice: Navigating the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Society's Equity and Inclusion., Available at <https://ourfutureisscience.org/blog/ai-and-social-justice-navigating-the-impact-of-artificial-intelligence-on-societys-equity-and-inclusion> (Accessed on 25/04/2026)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Png. M-T., 'The Critical Roles of Global South Stakeholders in AI Governance' Available at <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/41989/chapter-abstract/377785114?redirectedFrom=fulltext> (Accessed on 25/04/2026)

<sup>34</sup> Perera. M et al., 'Indigenous peoples and artificial intelligence: A systematic review and future directions' Op Cit

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization., 'The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence' Op Cit

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

## ***Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool: Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into its Technical Architecture***

of human right abuses<sup>38</sup>. It is also vital to ensure accountability including through giving victims an avenue to enforce their rights in cases of AI-driven human right abuses<sup>39</sup>. Further, there is need to uphold the right to privacy including through comprehensive data protection laws that prioritize individuals' privacy while also ensuring inclusive processes in order to avoid violation of the right to privacy especially in cases of unauthorized surveillance<sup>40</sup>.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

AI has emerged as a powerful tool that is revolutionizing governance with immense benefits for people and planet. However, in light of its inherent risks and challenges, it is vital to embrace AI in an ethical, inclusive, transparent and appropriate manner in order to bolster its role as a governance tool<sup>41</sup>. This involves incorporating social justice, equality and human rights into AI's technical architecture towards good governance.

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<sup>38</sup> United Nations., 'Protecting human rights in an AI-driven world' Available at <https://unric.org/en/protecting-human-rights-in-an-ai-driven-world/> (Accessed on 25/04/2026)

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> The Intersection of Technology and Human Rights: Navigating Challenges and Ensuring Protections., Available at <https://hakiAfrica.or.ke/2023/03/09/the-intersection-of-technology-and-human-rights-navigating-challenges-and-ensuring-protections/#:~:text=The%20delicate%20balance%20between%20technological,access%20to%20information%20and%20opportunities> (Accessed on 25/04/2026)

<sup>41</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization., 'The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence' Op Cit

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***Artificial Intelligence as a Governance Tool: Incorporating Social Justice, Equality and Human Rights into its Technical Architecture***