



# Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Journalism in Uganda: Opportunities, Challenges and Policy Recommendations



## Executive Summary:

Artificial Intelligence (AI), has greatly proliferated the very fabric of society and the information ecosystem has been no exception as it promises to heavily transform the newsroom's role of informing the public and shaping the narrative. Yet regulatory lethargy, technological inadequacy, ethical pitfalls and associated challenges condemn this transformative potential from the convergence of technology and information to jeopardy. With the 2026 election brewing in Uganda, action to ensure information and democratic integrity is necessary. This policy brief proposes the enactment of policies and measures to ensure the integrity of information in this technological age.

## Background:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems are increasingly becoming embedded in the core functions of digital platforms and their impact on journalism, freedom of expression, and access to information cannot be overstated. From content moderation algorithms and automated news feeds to surveillance technologies and disinformation amplification, AI systems developed and deployed by Big Tech companies wield enormous power over the information ecosystem. As newsrooms integrate this technology, there's been growing concerns regarding the predictive capabilities of these Models and their capacity to generate factual content <sup>1</sup>.

AI-powered tools such as Pinpoint <sup>2</sup> routinely support investigative journalism by analyzing unstructured data in real time, leveraging the power of AI to identify patterns and connections. However, countries like Uganda might not fully integrate these technologies owing to resource constraints, limited infrastructure, skill gaps and political sensitivities. State and non-state actors are increasingly leveraging AI tools for surveillance and profiling of journalists, particularly those critical of government policies or engaged in investigative reporting. AI-driven disinformation campaigns, algorithmic biases, and identity theft through manipulated digital content (such as deep fakes) threaten both the credibility and personal security of media practitioners <sup>3</sup>

Despite these emerging risks, Uganda's regulatory and policy frameworks remain inadequate to address the intersection of AI and journalism <sup>4</sup> leaving journalists vulnerable to the rapidly evolving digital

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, AI and the future of journalism: an issue brief for stakeholders. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391214>

<sup>2</sup> Google, PinPoint. Available at: <https://journaliststudio.google.com/pinpoint/about/>

<sup>3</sup> WITNESS, Report on a One-Day Expert Workshop on Understanding Deepfakes and Other Forms of Synthetic Media in Sub-Saharan Africa. Available at: <https://blog.witness.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WITNESS-South-Africa-Deepfakes-Workshop-Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Freedom House, The Repressive Power of Artificial Intelligence, 2023 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2023/repressive-power-artificial-intelligence>

ecosystem-undermining public access to information. At the same time, weak data protection mechanisms and the absence of ethical AI guidelines create fertile ground for abuses, undermining both press freedom and democratic accountability<sup>5</sup>. This policy brief explores these dynamics, highlighting the opportunities, challenges, regulatory gaps, and policy interventions necessary to uphold journalistic integrity and press freedom in Uganda's AI-influenced information age.

## Opportunities in Journalism:

### Supercharging Investigative Journalism

Imagine being able to sift through thousands of government reports, court records, or company documents for patterns, links, or irregularities in minutes. That's what AI-powered data analysis offers. AI is also key for automation of processes in the newsroom although this has to be aligned with the respect for human rights.<sup>6</sup> For journalists investigating corruption, land disputes, environmental damage, or human rights abuses, these tools can help scale efficiency and uncover the story behind the numbers.

### Fighting Mis/Disinformation

AI can effectively help track how mis/disinformation campaigns evolve through network analysis by mapping relationships and patterns, identifying bot networks or fake accounts to reveal coordinated inauthentic behavior. However, effective and beneficial deployment of AI for this purpose requires a strong commitment to responsibility and ethics since the strengths of AI that make it useful for detection can be exploited by malicious entities/actors to amplify disinformation on an unprecedented scale.<sup>7</sup>

### Giving a Voice to the Marginalised

Too often, important stories from rural areas or marginalised communities struggle to make it into the mainstream news partly due to the variation between representation and re-representation that is often exacerbated by language barriers or limited reach.<sup>8</sup> AI can bridge that gap through the integration of translation tools<sup>9</sup> making it easier to produce news in Uganda's many local languages.

<sup>5</sup> Canary Mugume, Uganda's AI Governance Dilemma: Policy or Framework To Drive Innovation? Decision Expected by 2025, Nile Post. Available at: <https://nilepost.co.ug/technology/246224/uganda-s-ai-governance-dilemma-policy-or-framework-to-drive-innovation>

<sup>6</sup> Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, Report on Artificial Intelligence technologies and implications for freedom of expression and the information environment, 29 August 2018. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/73/348>

<sup>7</sup> Center for News, Technology and Innovation, Artificial Intelligence in Journalism. Available at: <https://innovating.news/article/ai-in-journalism/>

<sup>8</sup> London School of Economics, Marginalisation and the media: How does the subaltern respond to mediation?. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2015/09/07/marginalisation-and-the-media-how-does-the-subaltern-respond-to-mediation/>

## Opportunities in Journalism:

However, while AI has a high level of accuracy, it is imperative to consider cultural nuances and contexts that can be lost in translation <sup>10</sup> as well as AI biases could exacerbate the exclusion. <sup>11</sup>

## Lightening the Load for Newsrooms

Many newsrooms across Uganda, especially outside major cities, face challenges of manpower, and limited budgets due to the decline in advertising revenue and the after effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. But what if they could leverage AI to automatically transcribe interviews, do real-time subtitling, improve storyboarding, visualising story ideas etcetera? This would allow journalists to focus on more in-depth reporting, investigations, or community stories and make better use of the little resources available.

## Challenges and Risks:

Digital and emerging technologies can facilitate the manipulation of and interference with information in ways that are harmful to societies and individuals. <sup>12</sup> Below are some of the challenges and risks arising from the use of AI in Journalism:

### 1 Disinformation:

Generative AI has enhanced campaigns by disinformation purveyors as it is being used to distort information on political or social issues, <sup>13</sup> spread hate speech and destabilise social cohesion, democratic processes and the right to access accurate information. AI-generated content overwhelms the information ecosystem which lessens the unsuspecting public's ability to sieve through the real and fake, <sup>14</sup> rendering them susceptible to these false information and eroding trust in public journalism.

### 2 Bias:

AI systems may perpetuate or amplify biases contained in data that they are trained on if it incorporates discriminatory assumptions <sup>15</sup>. Since content visibility depends on AI algorithms' decision, the bias may result in the algorithms promoting incendiary content over reliable information <sup>16</sup>. This creates a novel barrier for the journalistic profession as they engage with inherently biased AI-powered tools in a bid to remain fair and balanced.

<sup>9</sup> The Click, The AI-Augmented Journalist. Available at: <https://theclick.news/automating-newsroom-translations-with-ai/> Available at: <https://theclick.news/automating-newsroom-translations-with-ai/>

<sup>10</sup> Gondwe, G. (2025). AI in African Newsrooms: Evaluating Translation Accuracy, Reliability, and Cultural Sensitivity in Tanzanian Media. *Journalism Practice*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2025.2507091>.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations - Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, Building an accessible future for all: AI and the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. Available at: <https://unric.org/en/building-an-accessible-future-for-all-ai-and-the-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities/>

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, Global Digital Compact. Available at:

[https://www.un.org/global-digital-compact/sites/default/files/2024-09/Global%20Digital%20Compact%20-%20English\\_0.pdf](https://www.un.org/global-digital-compact/sites/default/files/2024-09/Global%20Digital%20Compact%20-%20English_0.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Freedom House, supra n.6

<sup>14</sup> Raymond Amumpaire, Artificial Intelligence and the Biggest Election Year, 2024. Available at: <https://pctechmag.com/2024/08/artificial-intelligence-and-the-biggest-election-year/>

### 3 Copyright:

Given that the AI algorithms for most of the tools used by the newsrooms are trained on large data sets, there is a risk of the datasets containing journalistic articles and books either behind a paywall or copyrighted. The unauthorised, unattributed, and uncompensated use of journalistic content to train AI systems <sup>17</sup> poses a challenge, as increasingly seen from the bulk of suits <sup>18</sup> and litigation <sup>19</sup> against the developer companies redefining how journalists create or impart information and shape narratives.

### 4 Transparency:

This is tied to the explainability of how algorithms work and how they make decisions. Can a journalist using Open AI's ChatGPT model, for example, be able to explain how the algorithm has arrived at whatever solution or answer it has given them? This 'black-box' issue <sup>20</sup> creates opacity and may complicate legal compliance and further the bias in datasets. <sup>21</sup>

### 5 Privacy:

AI presents fresh ethical challenges in terms of data protection and privacy for journalists as AI algorithms crunch volumes of personal data and in Uganda where the law allows state surveillance <sup>22</sup>, this dependence on personal data amplifies risks to audience and journalistic sources' privacy.

### 6 Tech Divide:

AI augments the resource dynamic between small and big newsrooms which determines how journalists benefit from this technology. This divide is worsened by the lack of skills to fully engage and poses threats from potential misuse.

<sup>15</sup> Caliskan, A, Bryson, JJ & Narayanan, A 2017, 'Semantics derived automatically from language corpora contain human-like biases', Science, vol. 356, no. 6334, pp. 183-186: <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aal4230> Available at: <https://scispace.com/pdf/semantics-derived-automatically-from-language-corpora-4lzxr2e2vb.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Freedom House, The Repressive Power of Artificial Intelligence, 2023 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2023/repressive-power-artificial-intelligence>

<sup>17</sup> OAS, Joint statement on artificial intelligence and freedom of expression [https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/JSForm/?File=/en/iachr/expression/media\\_center/preleases/2025/089.asp](https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/JSForm/?File=/en/iachr/expression/media_center/preleases/2025/089.asp)

<sup>18</sup> The Guardian, Meta wins AI copyright lawsuit as US judge rules against authors <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jun/26/meta-wins-ai-copyright-lawsuit-as-us-judge-rules-against-authors>

<sup>19</sup> The Guardian, Anthropic did not breach copyright when training AI on books without permission, court rules, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jun/25/anthropic-did-not-breach-copyright-when-training-ai-on-books-without-permission-court-rules>

## Policy Landscape:

Uganda does not have a specific AI law in place and policy direction for the AI ecosystem is guided by a number of laws that govern specific elements pertaining to AI.

### (I) National Level

#### **(a) The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 as amended**

The Constitution empowers the state to enable technological advances including Artificial Intelligence by enacting enabling policies and legislation (National Objective XI). It further provides for the right to privacy under Article 27. This forms the basis for the protection of privacy of data, a key element in the AI-development cycle.

#### **(b) The Uganda Communications Act Cap. 103**

The Uganda Communications Act <sup>23</sup> provides for Minimum Broadcasting Standards which bar the broadcasting of content containing distortion of facts. Given the non-linear development of AI, these standards are inadequate to cover issues of AI facilitated dis/misinformation and other synthetically generated content that might be churned out by the newsroom.

#### **(c) Data Protection and Privacy Act Cap. 97**

This Data Protection and Privacy Act <sup>24</sup> is aimed at protecting the privacy of the individual and of personal data by regulating the collection and processing of personal information through the principles of ethical data collection. It also establishes the Personal Data Protection Office (PDPO) as the data regulator. The Act falls short of clear provisions on algorithmic transparency or bias in data models thereby disregarding ethical challenges and creating a legal voidall while being burdened by weak enforcement.

<sup>20</sup> Vera Gallisti, Muneeb Ul Lateef Banday, Clara Berridge, Alisa Grigorovich, Juliane Jarke, Ittay Mannheim, Barbara Marshall, Wendy Martin, Tiago Moreira, Catharina Margaretha Van Leersum, Alexander Peine, Addressing the Black Box of AI—A Model and Research Agenda on the Co-constitution of Aging and Artificial Intelligence, *The Gerontologist*, Volume 64, Issue 6, June 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnae039>. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article-pdf/64/6/gnae039/57979931/gnae039.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> African Union, *Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy*. Available at: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44004-doc-EN-Continental\\_AI\\_Strategy\\_July\\_2024.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44004-doc-EN-Continental_AI_Strategy_July_2024.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> *The Regulation of Interception of Communications Act, Cap. 101*. Available at: [https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/18482/source\\_file/45ae2c21f8f55540/ug-act-2010-18-publication-document.pdf](https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/18482/source_file/45ae2c21f8f55540/ug-act-2010-18-publication-document.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> *Uganda Communications Act Cap. 103*: <https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/UCC-Act-2013.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> *Data Protection and Privacy Act Cap. 97*: [https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/18002/source\\_file/165f818674c9cea7/2019-9.pdf](https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/18002/source_file/165f818674c9cea7/2019-9.pdf)

**d) The Computer Misuse Act Cap. 96**

The Computer Misuse Act <sup>25</sup> and its amendments <sup>26</sup> prevent the abuse or misuse of information systems including computers but are criticised for threatening the right to freedom of expression online, including the right to receive and impart information. <sup>27</sup> It covers hate speech but lacks a specific penal provision for AI-generated mis/disinformation. This vagueness creates an avenue to punish journalists for AI errors in the absence of perspicuous guidelines.

**(e) Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act Chapter 222:**

The Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act <sup>28</sup> provides for protection to work that is original and is reduced to material form in whatever method irrespective of quality of the work or the purpose including articles, books (journalistic memoirs), audiovisual works and sound recording. In addition to lacking a specific AI provision, the Act lacks clear deliberation on fair use for training AI algorithms used by journalists.

**(f) Fourth Industrial Revolution Strategy:**

The country developed a Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) strategy aimed at positioning Uganda as a leading hub in harnessing 4IR technologies including AI. The Strategy advances enhancement of the deployment and use of 4IR technologies in Uganda to drive productivity. However, it lacks sector specific interventions for the media and places little emphasis on ethical issues arising out of AI and journalism while lacking specific implementation mechanisms which leaves the media unguarded from legal ambiguities.

<sup>25</sup> Computer Misuse Act Cap. 96 [https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/17971/source\\_file/4421e476aa97b499/2011-2.pdf](https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/17971/source_file/4421e476aa97b499/2011-2.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act 2022,

<https://chapterfouruganda.org/sites/default/files/downloads/The-Computer-Misuse-%28Amendment%29-Act-2022.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Uganda: Scrap draconian law aimed at suppressing freedom of expression online

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/uganda-scrap-draconian-law/>

<sup>28</sup> Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act Cap. 222, [https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/111713/source\\_file/ac1d312204f0917b/2006-19.pdf](https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/111713/source_file/ac1d312204f0917b/2006-19.pdf)

## (II) Regional Instruments

A number of efforts have been initiated on a continental level with the African AI and Information Ecosystem.

### a) Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy:

The Strategy <sup>29</sup> advocates for harnessing AI for Africa's development. In particular, it speaks to ensuring the availability of high-quality and diverse datasets for AI and focuses on information integrity which includes tech and journalism. It also focuses on building infrastructure for AI and core capabilities including information integrity, media and information literacy which influence increased use of AI in journalism.

### b) Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade:

The Protocol <sup>30</sup> provides for facilitation of the digital transformation of State Parties and data governance which have an impact on digitalisation of the newsroom which is increasingly digital. This is in terms of infrastructure, quality data for training algorithms, bridging the digital and skills gaps which form the bedrock for journalistic AI.

### c) The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community:

Article 5(1) of the EAC Treaty <sup>31</sup> advances the development of policies and programmes aimed at widening and deepening cooperation among the Partner States in research and technology which paves the path for the discussion on frontier technology like AI. It also creates an enabling environment for the safe use of technologies by addressing the misuse of AI technology.

#### Other interventions:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1 African Digital Compact.</p>  | <p>3 Resolution ACHPR/Res.620 on data governance</p>                                    |
| <p>3 Declaration of Principles On Freedom of Expression And Access to Information in Africa.</p> | <p>4 Resolution ACHPR/Res.630 on the duty to maintain information integrity online.</p> |

<sup>29</sup> African Union, supra n. 21 <https://media.u>

<sup>30</sup> African Union Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade. Available at:

[https://africanlii.org/akn/aa-au/act/protocol/2024/free\\_trade\\_area\\_on\\_digital\\_trade/eng@2024-02-18/source.pdf](https://africanlii.org/akn/aa-au/act/protocol/2024/free_trade_area_on_digital_trade/eng@2024-02-18/source.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community,

[https://www.eala.org/uploads/The\\_Treaty\\_for\\_the\\_Establishment\\_of\\_the\\_East\\_Africa\\_Community\\_2006\\_1999.pdf](https://www.eala.org/uploads/The_Treaty_for_the_Establishment_of_the_East_Africa_Community_2006_1999.pdf)

## (III) International Instruments

### **a) Universal Declaration of Human Rights:**

The Declaration provides for the right to freedom of opinion and expression which comprises the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas by any means of communication.

### **b) The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):**

Article 19 of the ICCPR mirrors Article 19 of the UDHR in providing for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas. **General Comment No. 34 on Article 19**, extended the application of Article 19 to digital spaces in which AI operates.

### **c) UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence**

The recommendation addresses ethical issues related to the domain of AI recognising that AI creates a new context for journalists. It supplies guidance on dealing with the issues created by algorithms when they reproduce and reinforce existing biases discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping.

### **d) UNESCO's Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms:** <sup>32</sup>

These guidelines deal with the problems of dis/misinformation and hate speech online by outlining human rights respecting, risk mitigation processes for content moderation and curation. They also highlight overarching principles that should be followed in all governance systems that impact freedom of expression and access to information on digital platforms covering the journalistic role of imparting information to the public whenever done over systems that are AI-enabled.

### **e) Global Digital Compact (GDC):**

This landmark global instrument <sup>33</sup> furnishes sagacity on information integrity, recognising that digital and emerging technologies can facilitate the manipulation of and interference with information in ways that are harmful to societies and individuals, and negatively affect the enjoyment of human rights. It promotes information integrity, integrity of democratic processes by mis/disinformation and hate speech online.

<sup>32</sup> UNESCO, Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387339>

<sup>33</sup> United Nations, *supra* n. 12

# Recommendations:

The intersection between artificial intelligence and journalism in Uganda offers both promise and peril. Uganda requires a coordinated multi-faceted response to protect journalistic integrity, and harness the opportunities of AI responsibly. The following recommendations are proposed:

## **A** Government and Policy Makers

- 1) Develop a coherent and harmonised policy for AI and journalism in line with regional and international standards.
- 2) Allocate adequate budget towards capacity building and AI literacy for media professionals.
- 3) Introduce ethical guidelines and safety protocols for AI use in newsrooms.
- 4) Establish independent oversight institution on the use of AI and enforce compliance with standards.
- 5) Support regulatory sandboxing initiatives.
- 6) Development and roll-out of AI assessment and evaluation tools.
- 7) Provide incentives for citizen-led solutions that identify and mitigate AI biases and high-risk issues within journalistic AI systems.
- 8) Foster international and regional collaboration on AI governance.
- 9) Enforce business and human rights standards for Big Tech companies.
- 10) Conduct a survey of major economic, industrial clusters and specialisations of the economy to integrate AI innovation with industry requirements.

## **B**

### **BIG TECH**

- 1) Enhance the transparency and accountability of systems.
- 2) Conduct risk assessments for risks associated with AI development and deployment in African contexts.
- 3) Provide access to redress and remedy where violations occur.
- 4) Invest in capacity building programs and promote sharing of experiences in developing necessary AI skills for the AI era.
- 5) Mobilise technical and financial resources to facilitate researchers' and innovators' access to funding and data.
- 6) Promote equal access to AI enabled opportunities and equitable distribution of benefits at all levels.
- 7) Support the mapping of AI research gaps in Africa to facilitate research and innovation.
- 8) Develop a toolkit on the enabling environment for journalismAI startups in Africa with a focus on information integrity.

## **C** Journalists and Media Houses

- 1) Invest in and support capacity building and AI literacy for media professionals through AI-curriculum Models for journalists and the public.
- 2) Localisation of AI models to support media houses and journalists.
- 3) Introduce ethical guidelines and safety protocols for AI use in News rooms.
- 4) Strengthening communities of practice to work on localised AI solutions for news rooms, integrating local data sets.
- 5) Leverage on cross border collaborations to strengthen AI usage in news rooms.
- 6) Creating communities of practice to support AI usage and deployment in news rooms and journalism entities.
- 7) Collaboratively assess the impact of misinformation and disinformation.

## **D** CSOs and Development Partners

- 1) Invest in and support capacity building and AI literacy for media professionals through AI-curriculum Models for journalists and the public.
- 2) Protect journalists from AI-enabled threats and harassment.
- 3) Ensure accountability and transparency in the design and deployment of AI systems.
- 4) Advocate for agile, forward-looking and risk-based regulations.
- 5) Strengthen international cooperation to address the challenge of misinformation and disinformation and hate speech online and mitigate the risks of information manipulation in a manner consistent with local & international law.
- 6) Raise awareness of AI implications on the integrity of information.
- 7) Call on digital technology companies and developers to continue to develop solutions and publicly communicate actions to counter potential information harms.
- 8) Strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers by promoting diverse and resilient information ecosystems.
- 9) Push for the translation of laws and policies associated with AI and journalism.

## *Recommendations*

- 10)** Collaboratively assess the impact of misinformation and disinformation.
- 11)** Cross border collaborations to allow for knowledge transfer on AI integration in news rooms.
- 12)** Strengthening communities of practice to work on localised AI solutions for news rooms, integrating local data sets.

## Conclusion:

Artificial intelligence (AI) offers efficacious potential to improve storytelling, combat mis/disinformation, and expand information availability but also creates significant risks to press freedom, privacy, and democratic discourse. Not only do journalists have to deal with growing disparities in access to technology, they have to tackle algorithmic prejudice and surveillance. These vulnerabilities will only increase if immediate institutional, legislative, and policy changes are not made, particularly as Uganda prepares for the 2026 elections. Now is the time to put safeguards in place that will guarantee AI serves the public interest rather than working against it.

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