Concept Note

2nd Edition of the Innovate Africa Symposium

Strengthening Data Governance in the African Data Ecosystem

Place: Rwanda – Kigali – NISR

Date: September 25 - 27, 2024

1. Introduction and background

The inaugural "Innovate Africa Symposium", which took place in Johannesburg, South Africa from October 25-27, 2023 with the theme "*Ideating Partnerships to Enable Data-Driven Government Agencies*," laid the groundwork for ideating partnerships to enable data-driven government agencies, highlighting the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing in leveraging data for development. Building on this foundation, the second edition of the symposium shifts focus to data governance[1], acknowledging its role as a cornerstone of sustainable development in the digital era.

African nations are charting their course through the complexities of the digital era, and the creation of solid data governance frameworks is paramount for leveraging data effectively to drive socio-economic growth. The African Development Bank (AfDB), through its Data Innovation Lab initiative, has been focusing on the data ecosystem to propel Africa towards efficient data utilization by tackling the challenges.

In recognition of this critical imperative, the AfDB, in concert with its Data Innovation Lab and in partnership with the National Institute of Statistics Rwanda, University of Rwanda, and the United Nations Statistics Division, is delighted to announce **the second edition of the Innovate Africa Symposium**. This year's theme, "*Strengthening Data Governance in the African Data Ecosystem*," is dedicated to propelling data

---

[1] Data governance refers to diverse arrangements, including technical, policy, regulatory or institutional provisions, that affect data and their cycle (creation, collection, storage, use, protection, access, sharing and deletion) across policy domains and organisational and national borders. Data governance is one of the top policy priorities that governments must address, to maximise the benefits of data access and sharing, while addressing related risks and challenges (OECD)

governance forward across the continent. The symposium is set to gather thought leaders from government, civil society, the private sector, academia, and international organizations to engage in discussions about robust data governance frameworks that enhance transparency, operational efficiency, and innovation in both public and private spheres.

Effective data governance ensures that data is used responsibly, ethically, and in compliance with legal and regulatory standards, thus fostering trust and enabling data-driven decision-making. However, African nations face unique challenges in establishing data governance frameworks, including varying levels of digital infrastructure, regulatory capacities, and skills.

For instance, implementing data governance within official statistics encompasses guaranteeing precision, confidentiality, protection, ethical integrity, cohesive integration, and active stakeholder participation. This process incorporates stringent quality control, effective data anonymization techniques, secure data handling protocols, adherence to ethical norms, seamless data consolidation, and promoting collaborative partnerships.

This symposium aims to address these challenges by fostering dialogue on best practices, innovative approaches, and collaborative models for strengthening data governance across Africa. Through keynote addresses, panel discussions, and the scholarly workshop centered on "*Data Governance in Public Sector*", participants will explore the pillars of data governance, including data quality, data security, data catalog, data lineage, metadata management, data privacy, and the ethical use of data. The event will serve as a platform for sharing experiences, challenges, and success stories, with the ultimate goal of developing actionable recommendations and strategies for implementing effective data governance frameworks that support Africa's digital transformation and sustainable development objectives.

2. Data Governance – Motivation

Selecting "Data Governance" as the primary focus for the second edition of the Innovate Africa Symposium is highly relevant and crucial, not only for the African context and the African Development Bank (AfDB) but also for a wide range of stakeholders within the data ecosystem, including National Statistics Offices (NSOs), government agencies, private sector entities, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations across the continent for several reasons:

- *Support for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*: Data governance is fundamental in the African context due to its role in supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Effective management of data ensures that high-quality, reliable, and timely data are available to inform policy decisions, monitor progress, and evaluate the impact of development initiatives. This is particularly crucial for Africa, where countries

are striving to meet ambitious development goals amidst various socio-economic challenges.

- *Enhancing data security and privacy*: With the rapid digitization of African economies, data breaches and misuse have become significant concerns. Data governance frameworks ensure that personal data is collected, stored, and used in compliance with international standards and local regulations, protecting individuals' privacy and enhancing trust in digital systems. This is especially important for NSOs and the AfDB as they handle sensitive data that, if compromised, could undermine public trust and hinder development efforts.

- *Facilitating data sharing and collaboration*: Data governance promotes the standardization of data formats and protocols, which facilitates data sharing between different entities, including government agencies, the private sector, and international organizations. For the African Development Bank, which plays a pivotal role in coordinating development efforts across the continent, effective data governance enables better collaboration and resource allocation. Similarly, for NSOs, standardized data governance practices improve the accuracy and comparability of statistical data across countries, enhancing regional and continental analyses.

- *Empowering data-driven decision making*: In the African context, where resources are often limited, ensuring that policy decisions are informed by accurate and timely data is critical. Data governance frameworks support the establishment of robust data ecosystems where data quality and integrity are prioritized, thereby empowering government agencies, including NSOs, to provide insights that lead to more effective policies and programs.

- *Promoting innovation and economic growth*: Good data governance is a catalyst for innovation and economic growth. By ensuring that data is accessible, secure, and reliable, African countries can attract investments in technology and innovation. This creates opportunities for developing new products and services, enhancing competitiveness, and fostering economic growth. For the African Development Bank, supporting such initiatives aligns with its mission to stimulate sustainable economic development and social progress.

- *Addressing regulatory compliance and global standards*: As African countries engage more with the global digital economy, compliance with international data protection regulations becomes increasingly important. Data governance frameworks help countries align with global standards such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), facilitating international trade and cooperation. For NSOs, which often collect and disseminate data across borders, adherence to such standards is critical to maintaining international partnerships and credibility.

- *Strengthening national statistical systems*: For NSOs, the importance of data governance extends to enhancing the entire national statistical system's capability to produce high-quality, relevant, and timely statistics. This is essential for planning, monitoring, and evaluating development programs at all

levels of government. Effective data governance ensures that statistical processes are transparent, data sources are credible, and methodologies are sound, leading to better outcomes for development initiatives.

In conclusion, focusing on "Data Governance" for the second edition of the Innovate Africa Symposium addresses a critical need within the African context. This approach is in harmony with the strategic objectives of the African Development Bank and addresses the operational requirements of various stakeholders in data and statistics, setting a foundation for sustainable development, digital transformation, and socio-economic progress across the continent.

3. Objectives

The second edition of the Innovate Africa Symposium, themed " *Strengthening Data Governance in the African Data Ecosystem*," aims to:

- Foster a comprehensive understanding of data governance within the context of Africa's rapidly evolving digital landscape.
- Highlight and discuss the critical differences and interconnections between data governance and data management.
- Provide a platform for key stakeholders—government bodies, private sector entities, academic institutions, and international organizations—to share insights, strategies, and innovative approaches to data governance.
- Address the unique challenges faced by African nations in implementing effective data governance frameworks, such as varying levels of digital infrastructure, regulatory capacities, and skills among stakeholders.
- Promote collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of partnerships to enable data-driven decision-making and policy formulation across the continent.

4. Expected Outcomes

By convening experts and practitioners from diverse sectors, the symposium anticipates achieving the following outcomes:

- Establishment of a shared understanding of best practices and innovative strategies for data governance that are tailored to the African context.
- Development of actionable recommendations and strategies for implementing robust data governance frameworks that can support digital transformation and sustainable development across Africa.
- Enhanced collaboration and knowledge exchange between stakeholders, leading to the development of a cohesive and supportive ecosystem for data governance in Africa.
- Publication of selected papers in the African Development Bank's Working Papers Series, contributing to the global body of knowledge on data governance

and serving as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.
- Strengthened partnerships and networks among symposium participants, fostering ongoing dialogue and cooperation in the field of data governance beyond the event.
- The symposium will serve as a cornerstone for future initiatives, setting a strategic direction for data governance efforts that align with the broader goals of sustainable development and digital transformation across Africa.

5. Workshop "Data Governance in Public Sector"

The involvement of the academic community in the second edition of the Symposium will be primarily facilitated through the workshop having the topic "*Data Governance in Public Sector*". From the 10 highest-ranked submissions, one author per paper will be granted funding to cover their flight, lodging, and daily expenses to participate in the Symposium in Kigali. Furthermore, the selected papers will be featured in the African Development Bank's Working Paper Series.

Submissions are encouraged to focus on, but not limited to, the following capabilities in relation with the Data Governance:

- Data catalog
- Data lineage
- Data quality
- Data privacy & compliance
- Data accountability and ownership
- Data access
- Data masking
- Data security
- Metadata management
- Master metadata management

Additionally, the submissions may concentrate on the following dimensions:

- *Innovation & strategy*: Exploring innovative data governance frameworks and strategies within the public sector.
- *Platforms & process*: Examination of platforms and processes that facilitate effective data governance and management.
- *Case studies*: Insightful case studies on successful data governance implementations and lessons learned.
- *Technology demo*: Demonstrations of technological solutions or tools that enhance data governance practices.

6. Participants

The Innovate Africa Symposium is designed to be a meeting for a diverse group of stakeholders, each bringing unique perspectives and expertise to the forefront of data governance. Our participants will include:

- *Government officials*: Policymakers and regulators who are on the front lines of shaping and implementing data governance laws and policies. Their involvement ensures the discussions are grounded in practicality and aligned with governmental objectives.

- *Industry leaders*: Senior executives from leading technology firms, data management companies, and other private sector stakeholders who are at the cutting edge of data governance practices. They offer insights into how data governance drives business innovation and growth.

- *Academicians and researchers*: Esteemed scholars and researchers from universities and research institutions worldwide, specializing in data governance, digital transformation, privacy law, and related fields. Their participation in the workshop will provide a foundation of theoretical knowledge, recent research findings, and an academic perspective on the challenges and opportunities within data governance in the public sector.

- *International organizations*: Representatives from global and regional bodies involved in setting data governance standards, providing guidelines, or offering support for data governance initiatives. Their contributions will bring a global perspective to the symposium, highlighting international best practices and facilitating cross-border collaboration.

- *Civil society and NGOs*: Advocates and practitioners from non-governmental organizations and civil society groups focused on digital rights, data privacy, and open data. They play a crucial role in representing the interests of the public and ensuring that data governance frameworks are inclusive and equitable.

- *Technology experts and innovators*: Individuals and teams leading the way in developing new technologies and methodologies that impact data governance, including artificial intelligence, blockchain, and cloud computing. Their involvement will shed light on the future of data governance and how emerging technologies can be harnessed.

This diverse assembly of participants will engage in a rich dialogue, sharing their diverse experiences and perspectives to foster a holistic understanding of data governance in the public/private sector. The collaborative environment of the workshop will encourage the exchange of ideas, strategies, and solutions, aiming to advance the implementation and effectiveness of data governance across Africa.

7. Agenda

Here are some insights into the structure of the agenda for the symposium:

- The symposium will feature a variety of session formats, including plenary sessions, panel discussions, and breakout sessions, all tailored to explore the various aspects of data governance.
- The symposium will also host 4 panel discussions on critical themes and 5 plenary sessions.
- During the first two days, the symposium will organize three concurrent tracks to delve into distinct themes: Track 1 will focus on Innovation & Strategy, Track 2 on Platforms & Process, and Track 3 on Case Studies & Technology Demonstrations. Each session is allocated 45 minutes for presentations followed by engaging discussions, with a total of 24 presentations planned.
- Additionally, there will be keynote speeches from distinguished plenary speakers.
- We aim to involve a broad range of organizations in proposing speakers and topics for the sessions, ensuring a rich and diverse dialogue on data governance.