

talk

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HARNESSING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT A NEW POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Imagine you are the agriculture minister of a developing country tasked with quickly identifying the cause of leaf damage across a number of farms in order to detect the presence of pests that could threaten your country's food security. Or you are an emergency response unit trying to assess the damage from a recent earthquake using drone photography to quickly predict reconstruction needs. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the engine currently driving innovative solutions towards tackling these types of problems, and the faster governments can support and adopt AI as part of a broader digital strategy, the better positioned they will be to quickly respond to their own development challenges.

Technological advancement around AI is being enabled by improved digital connectivity, rapidly increasing amounts of data, advanced algorithms, and leaps in processing power. And while most of its development and applications are currently in wealthier economies, AI also has incredible potential to dramatically reshape the landscape of the developing world. However, while AI offers significant potential to solve complex development problems, the technology comes with risks which, if left unattended to, can threaten to inflate an already widening AI divide between and within developing countries, increasing social inequality and leaving millions, if not billions, even further behind.

Governments can play a key role in balancing the opportunities and risks associated with AI by designing the right policies and regulatory frameworks to facilitate its development and adoption. The upcoming planned "Harnessing AI for Development" report¹ will provide guidance for governments on how to do just that. This report highlights how governments are designing policy and regulatory frameworks around AI to support their unique development needs, and make progress towards tackling each of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Beginning with an overview of potential benefits and applications, the study will provide specific examples of how AI can be leveraged across various sectors. To identify best practices, the report will present a survey of AI policymaking around the world, illustrating the wide range of tools and approaches that developing country governments can leverage to harness AI technologies. These lessons learned come from nineteen case studies representing both developed and developing countries, that reflect various levels of economic, human, and digital development.

While policies and strategies for harnessing AI remain in their infancy, there are emerging practices that can inform developing countries on their own AI strategies. One key

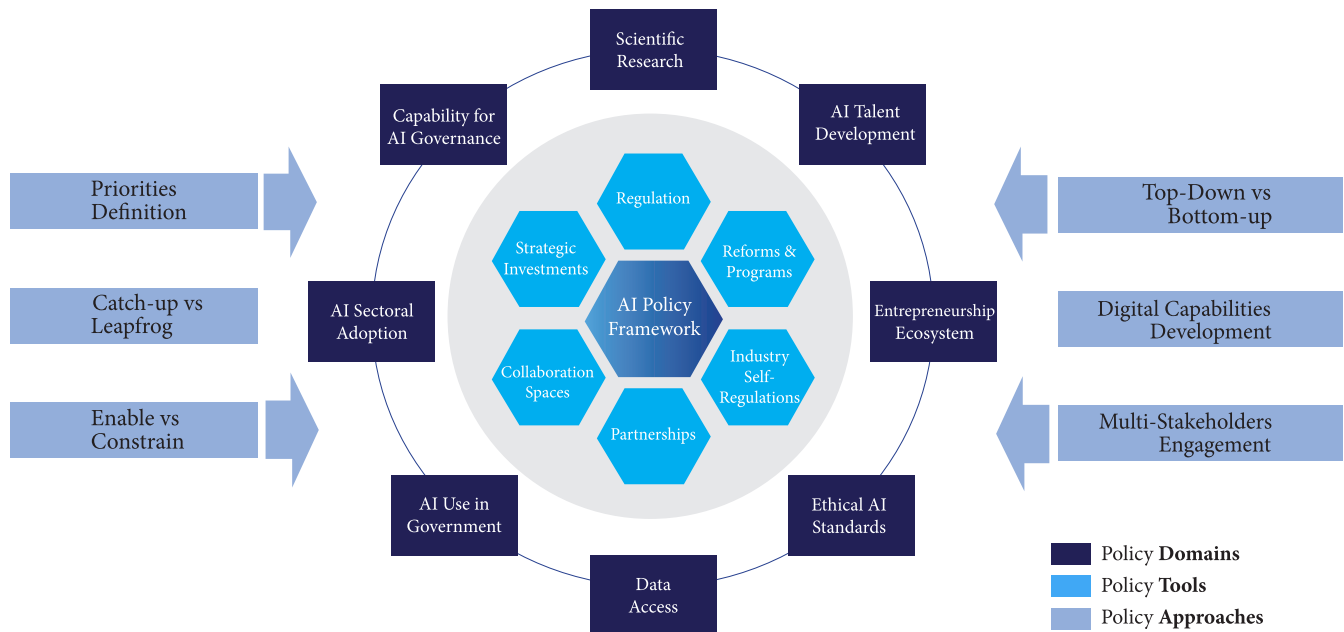
¹ The report is being prepared with support of the Digital Development Partnership (DDP) and is led by a team from the World Bank Group in collaboration with The Future Society. It includes feedback and consultation with many partners.

practice is for governments to adopt what is referred to as a 'North Star', in which they proactively set the course for AI development and adoption. In this role, a government can take several approaches ranging from a proactive 'directing'

role, to a facilitating 'enabling' role, employing various tools across multiple policy domains. Governments can lead the development of new policy and regulatory pathways in six ways (Figure 1):

1. Develop a roadmap/national strategy with clear goals to catch up or leapfrog their development;
2. Build AI capabilities including robust digital economy foundations;
3. Build capacity within government;
4. Convene and align stakeholders, particularly the private sector;
5. Spark demand and create market conditions for AI development;
6. Ensure the ethical, safe and responsible development and adoption of AI.

Figure 1: AI Policy and Regulatory Framework



Beyond broad fundamentals around regulatory pathways, the report will also provide specific policy options for governments to advance AI adoption. But rather than offering a one-size fits all solution, the report differentiates options based on three classifications of countries based on the state of their digital economy, whether it be emerging, transitioning, or transforming. The report will include

a diagnostic tool to assess where a country is positioned in terms of its digital development and AI maturity. This diagnostic tool, along with the list of policy options for each classification, based on lessons learned from the case studies, provides a comprehensive overview of how public policy and regulatory reform can have a significant impact on the development and adoption of AI-driven technology.

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