Insights Document

Safe & Trusted AI

Democratising AI Resources

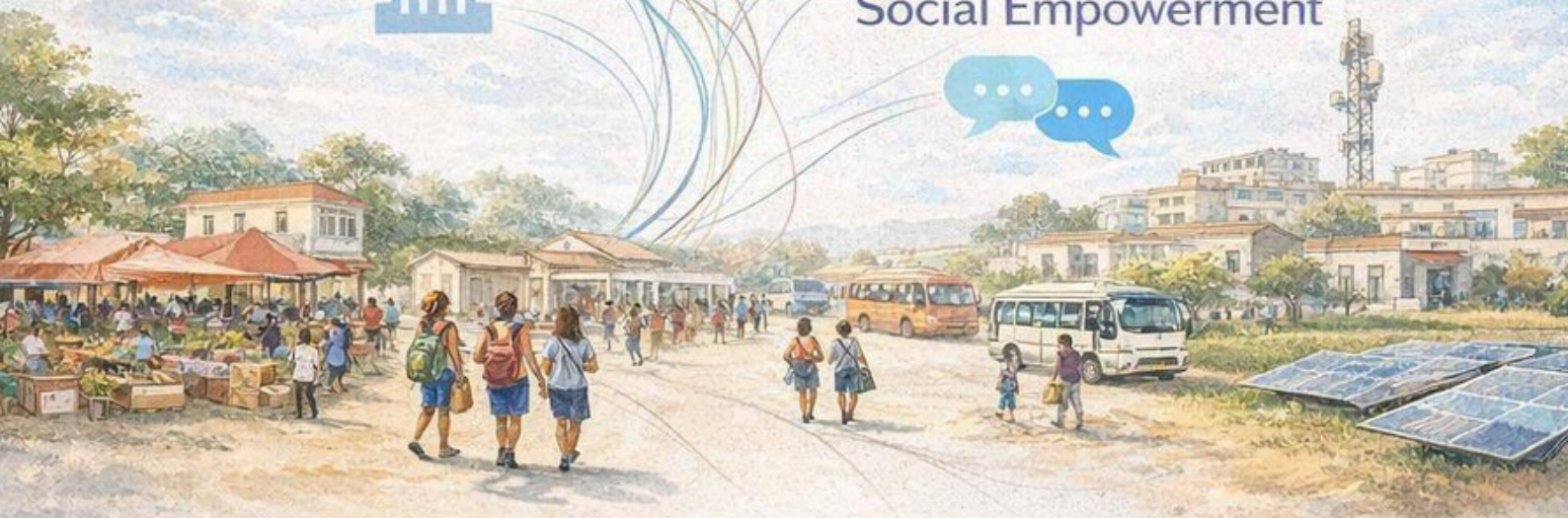
Multistakeholderism

AI for Economic Growth & Social Good

Multistakeholderism

Human Capital

Inclusion for Social Empowerment



MAP AI

Multistakeholder Approach to Participation in AI Governance

This cover has been designed using Generative AI

Insights Document

As global attention turns to the 2026 AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, insights emerging from a series of pre-Summit multistakeholder dialogues convened by the Centre for Communication Governance at National Law University Delhi (CCG-NLUD) and the Global Network Initiative (GNI), in collaboration with a range of partners, as part of the Multistakeholder Approaches to Participation in AI governance (MAP-AI), point to critical lessons in how AI governance should be understood, designed, and implemented—particularly from the perspective of the Global South.[1]

Context: India's leadership on and framing of the Summit highlight the growing recognition that AI's most immediate impacts are unfolding in multilingual, culturally diverse, resource-constrained, and high-inequality contexts. Our pre-event discussions highlighted the need for governance frameworks shaped by and responsive to the lived realities, opportunities, and challenges of people and communities in the Global South. In our pre-Summit convenings, which were held across four continents and structured to surface key priorities, outcomes, and themes for the AI Impact Summit, we engaged a diverse range of stakeholders from government, civil society, academia, multi-lateral organizations, foundations, and industry.

Through this multistakeholder process, key insights emerged around five of the Summit's key themes – Safe and Trusted AI; Democratising AI Resources; AI for Economic Growth and Social Good; Human Capital; and Inclusion for Social Empowerment – as well as two other, cross-cutting areas – Multistakeholderism; and Global South Leadership and Resources.

[1] This document has been authored by Shivani Mago and Shreya Tewari with edits and inputs from Jhalak M. Kakkar, Shashank Mohan, Elonnai Hickok and Jason Pielemeier.

Safe and Trusted AI

- **Different contexts pose distinct risks:** A narrow or disproportionate focus on long-term or existential risks, needs to be complemented by tracking and responding to more immediate, real-world harms, particularly in the Global South. Understanding present social vulnerabilities and inequities can help focus efforts to mitigate near-term harms, while informing strategies designed to address longer-term risks. Risk assessment and safety mechanisms need to be developed not only from a technical lense but accounting for the socio-cultural contexts and needs of the Global South. Improving access to capacity, compute resources, and diverse data sets will allow for locally-developed models and applications with context-specific functions and guardrails

- **Build safety and accountability through shared and participatory practices:** AI safety-related lessons and tools should be widely shared and developed through multistakeholder input and participatory practices. Developers and deployers must adopt ongoing due diligence approaches and risk management practices that draw on diverse expertise and stakeholder input to identify, mitigate, and remedy risks. Governments need to play an enabling role by establishing mechanisms such as incident response databases and governance guidelines to enable transparency and help ensure that appropriate actors are held accountable across the AI value chain.

Democratising AI Resources

- **Democratisation must go beyond access:** Expanding access to models and data is insufficient without parallel efforts to democratise access to connectivity, electricity, infrastructure, capacity, multistakeholder participation in governance, and meaningful accountability for harms. The design and technical requirements of an AI system need to reflect on the ground infrastructure and technical realities of the context it is intended to be used in.

- **Public-interest AI and Public Option AI, including Digital Public Infrastructure, are critical objectives and levers:** Public-interest AI is an important approach to countering the concentration of power in AI development while expanding equitable access to AI's benefits. Public option AI and Digital Public Infrastructure that is underpinned by a regulatory ecosystem that enables rights-respecting, open, transparent and accountable and interoperable systems are important foundations for making Public Interest AI possible. AI systems and related safeguards and governance should be designed to ensure that AI interventions are financially viable, functional for the lowest common denominator of hardware available in a particular context, and can be sustained by the local ecosystem after the initial funding and launch.

AI for Economic Growth and Social Good

- **Social good must be treated as a core objective, not a by-product:** AI-driven development and evolution should be pursued through a framework of Public Interest AI and propelled by and evaluated in light of its ability to reduce inequality and deliver tangible public benefit and trust—not just economic growth. Context-specific, rights-based, multi-layer metrics and counterfactuals should be developed to measure progress toward this objective and to develop and assess understandings of fairness and equity.

- **Language access is foundational:** Without meaningful investment in underrepresented languages and local cultural contexts, AI systems will remain at best irrelevant and inaccessible to large segments of society, particularly those in remote and underserved regions or vulnerable populations. While multilingual AI is foundational to building enabling AI ecosystems, it is imperative that models are designed and trained using equitable, inclusive, and representative data practices.

Human Capital

- **Gig work for data labelling is a critical but under-protected part of AI value chains:** Fair compensation, transparency, and social protections for data-linked gig workers is essential for ethical and sustainable AI ecosystems, especially in the Global South.

- **AI Safety Institutes can play a broader role:** Beyond technical risk, AISIs can help identify labour harms, support capacity building, and strengthen workforce resilience across AI ecosystems. For wide-scale success, these institutes must be participatory in nature and must be built for cross-regional collaboration. AI should be developed and deployed in ways that can help people from low-resource contexts leap-frog barriers to workplace representation and economic empowerment.

Inclusion for Social Empowerment

- **Inclusion must begin early in the AI lifecycle:** Engaging affected communities, civil society, and grassroots actors only after deployment undermines legitimacy and

effectiveness. Early participation of grassroots actors – for example community-level healthcare providers – is essential for socially grounded AI.

- **AI sovereignty is inseparable from power asymmetries:** Unequal access to compute, data, and expertise—combined with the outsized influence of large technology firms—limits many countries' and people's ability to shape AI outcomes and global norms. AI sovereignty should extend beyond national policies that support the development of local AI ecosystems, datasets, domestic models, to ensure that local communities have a meaningful say in how AI systems affect their lives. Therefore, sovereign AI should be supportive of and not to the detriment of locally recognised democratic norms, and must be grounded in open discussions on participatory, transparent, and accountable governance processes that enable meaningful public and stakeholder engagement.

Multistakeholderism

- **Participation does not always translate into power:** While multistakeholderism is widely endorsed, many actors—particularly civil society and academic organisations from the Global South—remain confined to consultative roles with limited influence over agendas, rules, and outcomes. Lessons learned from the context of multistakeholder Internet governance should inform AI governance. Recognition and countering of asymmetries across and within particular groups can enhance multistakeholder participation, especially in global governance of AI and digital technologies.

- **Cross-sectoral voices are missing from global AI governance:** Health, agriculture, education, and public-service practitioners, as well as sectors such as mediators and peacekeepers, are often absent from norm-setting discussions, reducing the real-world relevance of emerging frameworks. This gap is compounded by the growing role of new actors in the AI ecosystem, including editors, translators, and language experts who shape multilingual datasets and model behaviour, but whose expertise is rarely recognised in AI governance and norm-setting processes.

Global South Leadership

- **Context-driven governance is necessary:** Stakeholders have consistently warned against non-critical adoption of Global North models, calling instead for multilingual systems, local data, and regionally grounded approaches. When designed and deployed appropriately, AI can become a tool to enable participatory and community driven processes that are reflective of Global South priorities.

- **Stronger Global South networks are essential:** Building national and cross-regional collaborations across government, civil society, academia, and technical communities is key to identifying and sharing lessons, and shaping global and regional AI governance. Broad collaborations can be a counter-weight to global blocs that pit one country or a group of countries against each other.

About MAP-AI

The Multistakeholder Approaches to Participation in AI Governance (MAP-AI) initiative was launched by the Global Network Initiative (GNI) and the Centre for Communication Governance (CCG), with a goal of enhancing multistakeholder engagement and civil society impact at the India AI Impact Summit, hosted by the Government of India in New Delhi in February 2026. The broader objective of MAP-AI is to foster meaningful and effective multistakeholder engagement across a range of critical AI governance-focused convenings, processes, and initiatives, with a particular focus on elevating underrepresented voices and perspectives.

About CCG

The Centre for Communication Governance (CCG) at the National Law University Delhi (NLUD) is a leading research centre with over a decade of experience in information technology law and policy. CCG studies technology's impact on our society and engages with questions of individual and societal harms as well as addressing inequality. To achieve this vision, CCG adopts a three-pronged approach: (1) academic and policy research, (2) policy inputs domestically and internationally, and (3) capacity building of diverse stakeholders. Additionally, CCG seeks to highlight the Indian and Global South perspective at Global forums to enable holistic development of technology policy.

About GNI

The Global Network Initiative (GNI) is the leading multistakeholder forum for accountability, shared learning, and collective advocacy on government and company policies and practices at the intersection of technology and human rights. We set a global standard for responsible company decision-making to promote and advance freedom of expression and privacy rights across the technology ecosystem, in particular when addressing overly broad government requests and restrictions.