



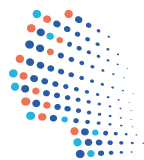
The Concept Note

Kujenga na Data Building with Data

19th - 21st August, 2026

Zanzibar

POLLICY



dLab

Tanzania Data Lab

Data Tamasha Africa

Data Tamasha Africa is a continental data festival born from the union of DataFest Africa and Data Tamasha, co-convened by **Pollicy**¹ and **Tanzania Data Lab (dLab)**². Data Tamasha Africa brings together Africa's data practitioners and enthusiasts, including citizens, governments, innovators, civil society, creatives, academia, and the private sector to strengthen collaboration, mobilize investment, and support the adoption of responsible, inclusive, and sustainable data solutions across the African continent.

Under the theme **Kujenga na Data/ Building with Data**, the festival shifts from deliberation to demonstration, spotlighting African-owned data and AI tools, governance frameworks, and digital solutions that serve communities, advance sustainable development, and interrogate how data systems shape power, access, and justice. Data Tamasha Africa belongs to the people building Africa's data future and to the communities whose lives depend on getting it right.

Background & Rationale

Data is at the heart of Africa's digital transformation. Across the continent, a broad range of economic activities increasingly use digitised data and knowledge as key factors of production. The internet, cloud computing, big data, and frontier digital technologies are collecting, storing, analysing, and sharing data in ways that are transforming social interactions, driving innovation, fueling job creation, and creating new pathways to economic growth. It is evident that when harnessed well, a data-driven economy gives rise to new opportunities for wealth creation, improved service delivery, and solutions to longstanding development challenges.

Yet building with data is not without complexity. The same digital transformation that creates opportunity also raises urgent questions about data privacy, security, and cross-border data flows. As African governments assert stronger claims over digital sovereignty guided by frameworks such as the African Union Data Policy Framework³ and the Africa Declaration on Artificial Intelligence from the inaugural Global AI Summit on Africa.⁴ The regulatory architecture is maturing rapidly. By the end of 2026, over 50 African countries will have data protection laws, with increasing sector-specific enforcement in high-risk domains including health, finance, and digital identity.

But regulation alone does not build. Despite this progress, communities, particularly women, youth, informal workers, smallholder farmers, creators, and the often marginalised groups, remain largely excluded from shaping how data and emerging technologies are designed, built, deployed, and governed. Data systems continue to privilege institutional and corporate interests, too often reproducing surveillance, extraction, gendered harm, and exclusion. The data revolution is generating enormous value across the continent, but the communities generating that value are rarely the ones directing it or benefiting from it.

1 <https://pollicy.org/>

2 <https://dlab.or.tz/#>

3 <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42078-doc-DATA-POLICY-FRAMEWORKS-2024-ENG-V2.pdf>

4 <https://c4ir.rw/docs/Africa-Declaration-on-Artificial-Intelligence.pdf>



Data Tamasha Africa 2026 seeks to foster a decisive shift from deliberation to demonstration of those actively constructing Africa's data future. Building on DataFest Africa 2025's theme of Reclaiming Our Data Futures⁵ and Data Tamasha's long commitment to harnessing the data revolution for sustainable development.⁶ The 2026 edition brings both practices together into a products-first, people-centred gathering that spotlights ethical, deployable data and AI tools and civic technologies developed by Africans for African realities and tests them against regulatory, developmental, social, and feminist accountability frameworks.

Data Tamasha Africa 2026 is built on a foundational belief shared by both Pollicy and dLab: that data, when analysed effectively and transformed into intelligence in the hands of communities, can be a source of knowledge, innovation, and lasting impact. But that transformation does not happen by itself. It requires builders from both the technical, social, and political practices, including technologists, creatives, policy makers, regulators, informal workers, and grassroots organisers working together, on African terms, toward African futures.

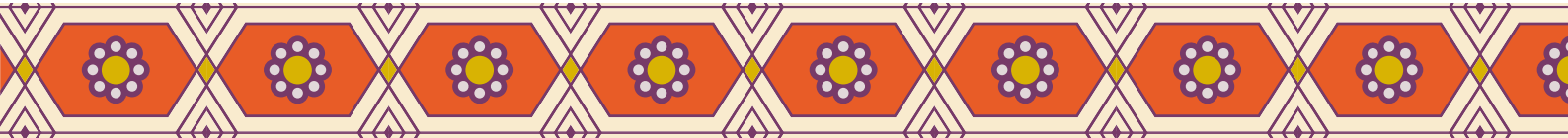
Under the theme Kujenga na Data/ Building with Data, Data Tamasha Africa 2026 seeks to advance African-owned, community-centred data and technology systems that translate policy ambitions into ethical, deployable solutions serving the public good while ensuring the communities most affected by data systems are the ones shaping them.

The event seeks to:

- Centre care, consent, safety, and dignity in how data and technology are designed and governed
- Shift from deliberation to demonstration, showcasing what African innovators are already creating
- Advance data governance that is equitable, transparent, and accountable to communities
- Strengthen the use of data and emerging technologies, particularly AI-enabled tools, to improve service delivery, create jobs, and unlock new opportunities
- Build a digital economy that works for women, youth, informal workers, and marginalised communities, not around them
- Foster a trusted data ecosystem where innovation and rights protection reinforce rather than undermine each other

5 <https://Data Tamasha.africa/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Data Tamasha-Africa-2025-Outcomes-Report.pdf>

6 <https://datatamasha.dlab.or.tz/>





The Specific Objectives are to:

1. Showcase African-built data products, civic technologies, datasets, and AI tools with demonstrated development impact and community value
2. Strengthen alignment between Africa's maturing data and AI regulatory frameworks and real-world technical practice
3. Build capacity and foster collaboration among policymakers, regulators, civil society, technologists, community educators, creatives, artists, and grassroots actors through applied learning to design, use, and govern data systems that are ethical, inclusive, and rights-respecting.
4. Advance feminist and community leadership in data governance and technology decision-making across the continent
5. Promote youth innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusion through exhibitions, mentorship, and the AI Innovation Challenge.
6. Mobilise strategic partnerships and investment to scale impactful, African-owned data solutions across the continent
7. Generate actionable policy and practice recommendations that support inclusive, ethical, and sustainable digital transformation aligned with Agenda 2063 and Tanzania's Development Vision 2050

Key Thematic Areas


Pollicy and dLab, through its curators, will curate sessions and showcases focusing on these core themes;

Track 1: Data Governance for Public Value

How do we govern data and AI well, and for whom? This track focuses on the frameworks, laws, and institutional practices that make trustworthy data ecosystems possible, covering data protection, ethical AI governance, privacy, cybersecurity, digital sovereignty, and cross-border data flows. We welcome sessions that bring working frameworks, draft regulations, audit tools, or live case studies into the room, so regulators, policymakers, civil society, and technologists can stress-test what's being built.

Track 2: Data and AI Innovation for Sustainable Development

What are we building with data, and is it reaching the communities it claims to serve? This track spotlights African-built innovations across agriculture, climate resilience, health, education, and public service delivery, aligned with Agenda 2063, Tanzania's Vision 2050, and the SDGs. We are looking for sessions anchored in working tools, deployed datasets, and field evidence, so participants leave with something to use, adapt, or build on.



Track 3: Safe and Joyful Digital Futures

The digital future we build must be safe, joyful, and genuinely liberating. Sessions examine platform accountability, community-led digital safety, legal frameworks on technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and ethical creator economies, and we welcome practical resources such as safety toolkits, draft policies, training curricula, and creative artefacts that participants can take home. The track anchors the Wellness Hub, a space to rest and reconnect, and the Games Nook, where African-designed games drive digital literacy and community engagement.

Track 4: Women, Youth and the Digital Economy

Who gets to shape, benefit from, and lead Africa's digital economy? Grounded in Afrofeminist methodologies, this track brings together women-led innovation, youth entrepreneurship, and the private sector conversations needed to turn ambition into livelihoods, including fintech, cashless economies, SMEs, digital trade, and AI talent pipelines. We prioritise sessions that surface working products, business models, and skills-building formats.

Track 5: The Afrofeminist Data Museum

The Museum is Data Tamasha Africa's living experiment in what it means to know, feel, and own your data. Curated through an Afrofeminist lens, it brings together artists, archivists, educators, game designers, and community members to build a shared canon of African data culture through finished and in-progress works that visitors can see, touch, hear, and interact with. It invites participants into an immersive, multi-sensory experience of data as living, historical, and deeply human.

Programme Structure

Data Tamasha Africa 2026 runs as a three-day hybrid festival combining high-level policy engagement, technical learning, innovation showcasing, and cultural celebration. The programme brings together approximately 200 participants across plenary sessions, immersive applied formats, and dedicated community spaces designed so that every participant, regardless of technical background, finds a place to contribute, learn, and build.

Sessions and Formats

Data Tamasha Africa 2026 runs as a three-day fest bringing together up to 200 participants across a rich mix of formats designed so that every participant, regardless of technical background, finds a place to contribute, learn, and build.

Session formats include:

- Lightning talks, keynote addresses, and panels across the festival's three days
- Side events and fireside chats on Africa's data and AI future
- Thematic plenary sessions across all three tracks
- Community dialogues and fishbowls centring lived experience and participatory discussion
- Policy-Practice labs bringing together regulators, developers, and civil society for structured co-creation
- Hands-On Masterclasses and Skills Clinics in AI, data analytics, governance, safety, and ethics
- Product Showcases and Tech Gardens featuring live demonstrations of African-built tools, platforms, and civic technologies

Special Spaces

Beyond the sessions, Data Tamasha Africa 2026 comes alive in dedicated spaces that embody the festival's spirit.

- The Afrofeminist Data Museum⁷, embedded at the centre of Stone Town, invites participants and the Zanzibar public into an immersive, multi-sensory experience that reframes data as living, historical, and deeply human, rooted in African bodies, stories, and communities.
- The Tech and Innovation Garden provides a dedicated showcase space for African-built tools, platforms, civic technologies, and data products where builders demonstrate, investors engage, and communities interact directly with the solutions being built in their name.
- The Games Nook brings play to the centre of learning, showcasing African-designed games that tackle social and data challenges, inviting participants to prototype, play, and experience firsthand how game design can drive digital literacy, behaviour change, and community engagement.
- The Wellness Hub offers a breathing space, a place to rest, reflect, and reconnect with the human realities behind the data conversations, recognising that rest is resistance.
- Creative and Cultural segments, including poetry, artwork, and storytelling, are woven throughout the program, alongside a special welcoming session, Zanzibar at a Glance, that grounds every participant in the place, people, and data realities of the island that is hosting this gathering.
- The Data Tamasha Africa AI Innovation Challenge and Hackathon anchor the programme, culminating in finals, pitching, and awards that celebrate Africa's boldest data and AI builders.

7 <https://datafest.africa/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Catalog-Data-Museum-25.pdf>



About Pollicy

Pollicy is an East African award-winning collective of technologists, data scientists, creatives, and academics working at the intersection of data, design, and technology to craft better life experiences by harnessing improved data. Our work focuses on influencing a culture of responsible data use, promoting appropriate data governance practices, and advocating for policies that support an enabling data ecosystem.

About Tanzania Data Lab (DLab)

Tanzania Data Lab (dLab) is a world-class data and innovation lab that harnesses the potential of the data revolution and the fourth industrial revolution in solving local, regional, and global sustainable development challenges through data and innovation. dLab embraces a systems approach to infusing data-driven decision-making and policymaking by strengthening data policies, practices, and use, and leveraging data-driven innovation and partnerships to improve people's lives.