DATA SCIENCE LAW LAB

Annual Newsletter 2025










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About us

The Data Science Law Lab, housed in the Faculty of Law at the University of Pretoria, is a dynamic research group dedicated to advancing rigorous, independent legal scholarship with a mission to support and shape data science and artificial intelligence (AI) innovation across Africa. Under the leadership of Professor Chijioke Okorie, the Lab explores how law, governance, and institutional frameworks, particularly intellectual property (IP), data licensing, privacy, and data-governance, can enable rather than impede data-driven innovation, ensuring it is inclusive, fair, and contextually grounded.

We publish open-access articles, policy reports, and toolkits; contribute to public and academic discourse; and provide practical, policy-relevant recommendations. Our outreach extends to convening collaborative events including the first Africa, Law & Emerging Technologies Policy Hackathon, a pan-African platform where postgraduate scholars, data practitioners, and policy-makers co-design policy solutions for real-world AI and data challenges.

Through capacity-building, mentorship, and engagement with institutions across Africa, the Lab supports and nurtures a new generation of data-law-policy scholars and practitioners. At the heart of our work is a firm belief: African data science and AI should grow under governance frameworks rooted in African values, contexts, and development priorities, not by defaulting to external templates.

2025 RESEARCH TEAM



Prof Chijioke Okorie
Principal Investigator/Founder



Mr Takudzwa Matekwe
Postgraduate Student Researcher



Ms Zinzi Shabangu
Postgraduate Student Researcher



Mr Nyasha Jawa
Undergraduate Student Researcher



Mr Benedict Moyo
Postgraduate Student Researcher



Ms Yeukai Pedsiza
Postgraduate Student Researcher



Ms Serena Nwafor
Undergraduate Student Researcher



Ms Siyamthanda Ndlovu,
Undergraduate Student Researcher

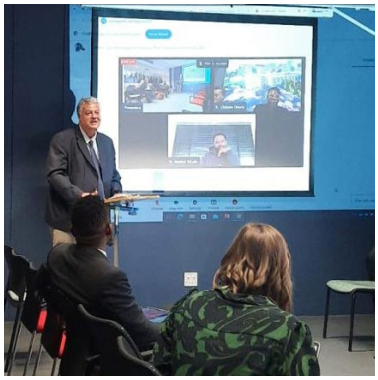
Advancing critical conversations

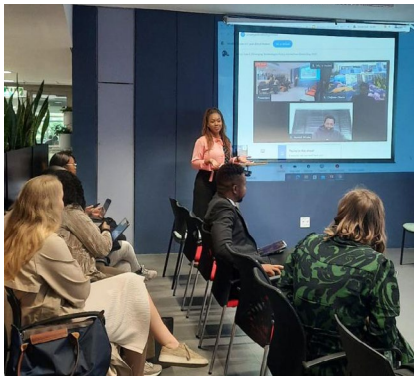
Events we hosted in 2025

We successfully hosted/convened a series of high-impact events focused on the nexus of law, technology, and data governance in Africa. Below are short summaries of these engagements:

Africa, Law & [Emerging] Technologies Policy Hackathon

On the 6th of May 2025, we hosted the **2025 Africa Law and Emerging Technology Policy Hackathon Demo Day**. Focused on the theme "Intellectual Property, Innovation and Technology in Africa," the hackathon provided a platform for students and professionals to brainstorm and deploy Africa-focused policy and technical solutions.





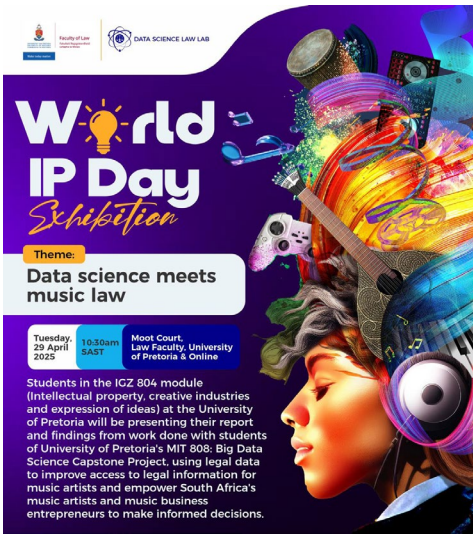






Participants worked to address challenges in South Africa's intellectual property (IP) administration, with key proposals tackling issues such as ensuring accessibility for the visually impaired in IP services, leveraging AI for automated patent pre-examination to reduce registration delays, and aligning IP protection with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to promote sustainable innovation.

Data Science meets Music Law Exhibition



On the 29th of April 2025, we convened a special **World IP Day Exhibition** under the theme "Data Science Meets Music Law". The exhibition showcased the interdisciplinary work of postgraduate students who investigated how data science tools intersect with music law to empower musicians in the creative economy.

The projects explored critical topics including the implications of the South Africa's Copyright Amendment Bill, royalty distribution, moral rights, and the challenges posed by AI-generated content and digital licensing. This collaborative work led to the development of a shared taxonomy and labelling system, which is currently being used to create a digital tool designed to help artists better understand copyright law.

Copyright and Data Science Interface Panel Discussion









On the 25th of June 2025, we hosted a dynamic panel discussion titled **"Copyright and Data Science - Legal Challenges in African Data Projects"**. Moderated by Prof. Chijioke Okorie, the discussion featured DSFSI lab members Prof. Vukosi Marivate and Dr. Tsosheletso Chidi. The conversation explored the legal, ethical, and community challenges faced by researchers working specifically with African language data. Key themes underscored the importance of community ownership and informed consent, the role of institutions in enabling responsible access, and the necessity of African-centered licensing frameworks, such as the NOODL license, to protect community interests while encouraging innovation.

Legal-technical AI governance and regulation in Africa Virtual Symposium



On the 15th of August 2025, we hosted a **Virtual Publication Symposium** as part of our project on Legal-technical AI governance and regulation in Africa. The project promotes a transdisciplinary approach to closing the gap between law and technology in African AI policy. The symposium featured cutting-edge research from scholars affiliated with institutions across South Africa, Nigeria, Canada, the USA, and Ghana. Topics included analyses of AI, data sovereignty, and governance challenges in Africa, the role of intellectual property in AI strategies, and critiques of the need for sui generis AI legislation in South Africa.

CC Licenses in the African Context - Virtual Gathering

On the 9th of July 2025, we co-convened a workshop on CC Licenses in the African Dataset Context with Creative Commons and CIPIT, Strathmore University Kenya. The aim was to explore the practical middle ground between data extraction and enclosure. The workshop showcased innovative frameworks like the Creative Commons (CC) Signals Framework, the NOODL license, and the Esethu Licensing Framework. The discussion emphasized the critical need for transparent and tailored licensing, alongside implementing safeguards to prevent exploitation and ensure equitable benefit-sharing for data provider communities.

Rights to Reality Webinar


tation:
ti-stakeholder Seminar: From rights to reality: Co-creating Africa's data access
lelines for the AI era
ptember 2025

w do we unlock Africa's vast data resources - from government reports and cultural thives to patent databases - to fuel the AI revolution responsibly?

Data Science Law Lab in collaboration with Data Science for Social Impact and African Institute Data Science and Artificial Intelligence at the University of Pretoria invites you to a high-level logue and webinar to contribute to developing normative standards to guide data collection, nayment and access issues concerning data. The seminar will take place on:

e: Monday, 08 September 2025
et: 4pm - 5pm SAST
ere: Zoom | Visit the link to: Register by 03 September 2025!
ose direct enquiries via email: researchdatasciencelawlab.ac.za

are honoured to be joined by a multi-stakeholder panel, including Honourable Commissioner Ourveena sy Geereesha Sono (Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, l a commissioner of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights), along with senior resentatives from Kenya Copyright Board, other African national IP offices and key African AI elopers.

programme will feature:
Presentation by Honourable Commissioner Ourveena Topsy Geereesha Sono on Resolution 620 by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)
Presentations and perspectives from national copyright offices and IP management agencies as well as AI developers
Participants' engagement and comments on the demand and supply side of data in Africa

ovite you to be part of this critical dialogue and we look forward to your participation in this vital versation on shaping data access for AI innovation.

DATA SCIENCE LAW LAB

On the 08th of September 2025, we **hosted a high-level dialogue** and webinar titled "From rights to reality: Co-creating Africa's data access guidelines for the AI era". The event focused on how to responsibly "unlock Africa's vast data resources", from cultural archives to government reports to fuel the continent's AI revolution. We were honoured to be joined by a multi-stakeholder panel, including Honourable Commissioner Ourveena Topsy Geereesha Sono (Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa), alongside presentations from national copyright offices and AI developers.

Tech Policy Fellows Study Tour Visit

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Gn

On 23 July 2025, the Data Science Law Lab, in collaboration with the Data Science for Social Impact Research Group, the Faculty of Humanities, and the Centre for the Future of Work, hosted a delegation of 14 Tech Policy Fellows from Ghana as part of a GIZ-led study tour. The cohort, drawn from government, academia, civil society, and the private sector, visited South Africa to engage in peer learning with local partners and to exchange insights on digital technology governance, including Ghana's ongoing implementation of its national AI strategy. The visit provided a valuable platform for knowledge sharing, and for the Lab to showcase its work on developing technical solutions for data rights reservation and transparency in AI training across Africa.

Amplifying our expertise across Africa and beyond

Where our expertise shaped conversations and guided global initiatives in 2025

In 2025, our work travelled farther than we ever could. We engaged across numerous high-level and strategic forums this year, solidifying our reputation as a leader in data science law and policy in Africa and globally. From lecture halls filled with students curious about the future of African AI, to global working groups shaping emerging norms, to policy roundtables rewriting the terms of digital participation across the continent, this was a year in which our ideas moved, touched, and transformed. We shared research in spaces where new futures are imagined, advised organisations trying to build those futures, and stood alongside communities ensuring that Africa's many languages, knowledge systems and histories are represented in the digital age.

Our engagements stretched across academic, policy, civil society, and industry ecosystems from the UNDP's Language Gap initiative to the G20's Digital Economy Working Group, from WIPO's global conversation on synthetic media to Africa-wide legal and innovation support. Whether speaking on a stage, advising a task force, or working behind the scenes as researchers, we carried one purpose with us: to make AI and digital innovation in Africa more equitable, more multilingual, and more rooted in the needs of the people who will inherit the technologies we help shape.

Below is a snapshot of the platforms where our expertise made a difference this year.

Stats Snapshot

DATA SCIENCE LAW LAB

- **Participated in 18 invited talks/ lectures/panels/workshops**
- **Across over 20 institutions/ partner and over 6 countries/ regions.**
- **Maintained 3 Expert advisory and global working group memberships**
- **Undertook over 5 consulting and policy support engagements**
- **Contributing to 2 major global policy consultations**

Engagements by thematic cluster

Keynotes, Lectures, and Conference Presentations



- **Keynote Speech:** Conference on the State of AI in Africa
- **Keynote Speech & Presentation:** AI Governance for Africa's Innovation Future
- **Presentation:** Superpowered by AI: Detection, Labeling, and the Infrastructure Challenge
- Equitable Licensing and Sharing of African Language Datasets (Hundzula Retreat) **Presentation:** on Equitable Data Licensing (NOODL License) at the Law Schools Global League Conference
- Data Science Law in Africa: Definition, Analysis, and Review
- **Presentation:** Children's Agency: Focus on Online Safety and Age of Consent
- **Presentation:** At the Material Digital Heritage Seminar (SOAS)
- Bridging the AI Divide: Turning Abstracts to Indigenous Languages
- **Panel discussion:** Beyond the Pitch: IP Tools for Commercial Value in Sports Law [Ms Zinzi Shabangu]
- **Keynote Speech & Presentation:** Data Licensing and Regulatory Aspects of Building AI Solutions (UNILAG, MIRG–ICAIR 2025)
- **Presentation:** University of Pretoria International Consumer Protection Conference [Mr Takudzwa Matekwe]

Expert Advisory Groups & Global Working Groups



- **Knowledge Partner:** G20 Working Group on AI, Data Management, and Innovation for Sustainable Development
- **Advisor/Mentor:** Mozilla Common Voice Advisory Program
- **Member:** UNDP Global Expert Group on Closing the Language Gap in AI

Policy, strategy and legal support



- **Expert Consultation:** International AI Bill of Human Rights
- Legal Support for African Next Voices Teams (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya)
- **Co-investigator:** Fostering Information and Knowledge Access Project (ARIPO Region)
- **Consultant:** Masakhane Research Foundation Data Governance Research Project
- **Judge:** WIPO Nigeria National IP Essay Competition 2025

Workshops, panels and multi-stakeholder forums



- **Panel Moderator:** Harnessing Global Solidarity for STISA 2034 (G20 Africa Day Celebration)
- **Panel Discussion:** Trust, Ethics, and Inclusion: Building Responsible AI for Africa's Digital Economies (MIRG–ICAIR 2025)
- **Panelist:** The Future of Law in an AI-Driven World (Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr/UP Private Law Department)
- **Workshop and Exhibition:** AI Expo Africa
- **Speaker:** Wits Centre for Journalism's Workshop on AI in African newsrooms
- **Panelist:** AI for Africa Panel Discussion at G20 South Africa conference

Institutions and platforms that hosted our work in 2025



















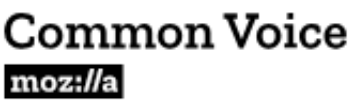
























Publications

In 2025, our team advanced key debates at the intersection of data, technology, and the law through a series of new publications. Several additional pieces are currently under review, and we look forward to sharing those developments in the year ahead.

Web posts:

- Matekwe, T., 2025. Blog: Law in tune, Data in groove: Data Science Meets Music Law – Highlights from the 2025 World IP Day Exhibition.
  Available: https://datasciencelawlab.africa/resourcess/data-sci-meets-music-law-2025/

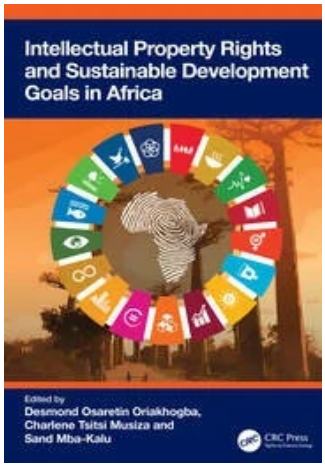
- Matekwe, T., 2025. Driving Innovation in Africa – Highlights from the 2025 Law and Emerging Technology Policy Hackathon.
  Available: https://datasciencelawlab.africa/resourcess/blog-2025-policy-hackathon-proceedings/

- Matekwe, T., 2025. Kruger's Lion sleeps: Shaping the Future of Consumer Law and AI (reflections from the UPICLC).
  Available: https://datasciencelawlab.africa/conference-reflections-upiclc/

- Mugauri, J., 2025. Event Report: AI for African Healthcare: Beyond Chatbots Toward Contextually Informed Innovation.
  Available: https://datasciencelawlab.africa/event-report-ai4-african-healthcare/

- Pedzisa, Y., 2025. Presentation on equitable data licensing (NOODL License) at the Law Schools Global League Conference 2025.
  Available: https://datasciencelawlab.africa/presentation-on-equitable-data-licensing-noodl-license-at-the-law-schools-global-league-conference-2025/

Book chapter(s):



- Smith, D. and Okorie, C.I., 2025. Unlocking Innovation: Paving the Way for High-Quality Patents and Sustainable Development in South Africa. In Oriakhogba, D (eds.) Intellectual Property Rights and Sustainable Development Goals in Africa (Routledge: 2025).

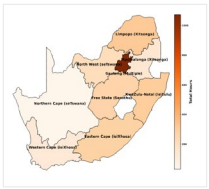
  Available here: https://www.routledge.com/Intellectual-Property-Rights-and-Sustainable-Development-Goals-in-Africa/Oriakhogba-Musiza-Mba-Kalu/p/book/9781041160021?srsltid=AfmBOopiBIjSOSlfIg5d6s013D-puoexSP1FZANtxIg8lUqFl8izvJxm.

Journal articles:



- Okorie, C.I., 2025. The fair dealing/fair use landscape for artificial intelligence innovation and computational research in Africa. *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*, pp.1-28.

  Available here: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13600869.2025.2557640



- Marivate, V., Olaleye, K., Mundia, S., Bakainga, A., Netshifhefhe, U., Milanzie, M., Mogale, T.H., Sindane, T., Abdulrasaq, Z., Mokgosi, K. and Okorie, C., 2025. Swivuriso: The South African Next Voices Multilingual Speech Dataset. arXiv preprint

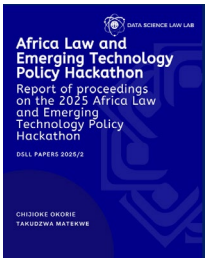
  Available: https://www.arxiv.org/abs/2512.02201



- Okorie, C.I. and Omino, M., 2025. Addressing Inequitable Openness in Licences for Sharing African Data and Datasets Through the Nwulite Obodo Open Data Licence. *Law, Technology and Humans*, *7*(3), pp.94-106.

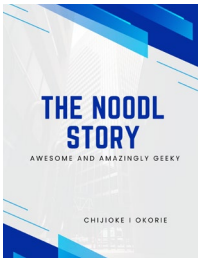
  Available here: https://lthj.qut.edu.au/article/view/4001

Other publications:



- 2024 Africa, Law & [Emerging] Technologies Policy Hackathon proceedings'. Zenodo.

  Available here: https://zenodo.org/records/15570183.



- 'It's the NOODL License – awesome and amazingly geeky! - The Development and Significance of the Nwulite Obodo Open Data License (NOODL)'. Zenodo.

  Available here: https://zenodo.org/records/15808369.



- Okorie, C. and Takudzwa, M. (2025) 'Report of proceedings: Data Science Meets Music Law Exhibition 2025'. Zenodo.

  Available here: https://zenodo.org/records/15570081



- NOODL Licence summary sheet
- NOODL Licence Plain Language Explainer

Awards, Achievements and Public Recognition

Celebrating the achievements, visibility, and public acknowledgement of our work.

This year, our work gained meaningful visibility through awards, recognitions, and media features. These moments reflect the strength of our research and the growing influence of our team across academic, policy, and public spheres.

Advancing AI and IP innovation across Africa



Prof Chijioke Okorie secures major grant

This year marked an important milestone as our PI, Prof Chijioke Okorie secured a **competitive grant** from Canada's International Development Research Centre to drive cutting-edge research on AI, intellectual property, and innovation ecosystems across Africa. The award strengthens our capacity to shape policy, support institutional reform, and expand the reach of our work across the continent's emerging digital economies.

Excellence recognised on a global stage


Law Schools Global League

Certificate of Achievement

This is to certify that

Chijioke Okorie

is recognized as a distinguished author of the article entitled

"Inequitable Openness in Licenses for Sharing African Data and Datasets: The Nwulite Obodo Open Data License (NOODL) Solution" for her exemplary contribution to the field of legal research and her role in securing the LSGL Research Award.

7 July 2025

Prof. Soledad Atienza Becerril
Co-President
Law Schools Global League

Prof. James Speta
Co-President
Law Schools Global League

Law Schools Global League Research Paper Award 2025

Our research on equitable data licensing featuring the NOODL Licence, was honoured with the prestigious Law Schools Global League Research Paper Award. This recognition reflects the international significance of our contribution to fair, development -oriented approaches to data governance, and it amplifies our leadership in shaping responsible AI and IP frameworks.

Celebrating our team

Outstanding achievements by emerging scholars

We are proud of the remarkable accomplishments of our team members.



Siyamthanda Ndlovu was profiled by the University of Pretoria for her interdisciplinary strengths and her growing contribution to responsible tech research.



Takudzwa Matekwe was featured for his work at the intersection of law, technology, and product liability within the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

These achievements highlight the depth of talent shaping the next generation of African technology, innovation and legal scholarship.

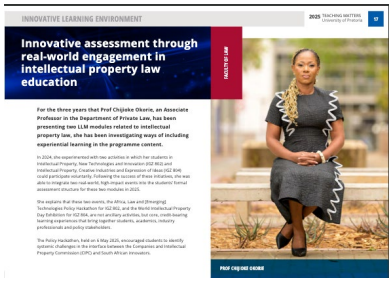
Showcasing impact through innovation



Innovate Feature

Our work was profiled in the University of Pretoria's ***Innovate*** magazine [p. 91], spotlighting the Data Science Law Lab's pioneering contributions to AI governance, data licensing, and multidisciplinary collaboration. The feature underscores how our research translates into practical, socially responsive innovation.

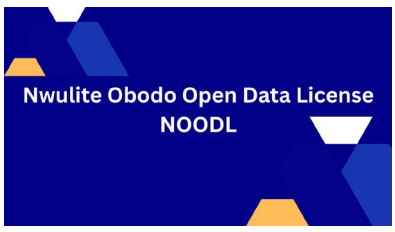
Teaching innovation in action



UP's Teaching Matters Feature

Our Africa, Law & [Emerging] Technologies policy hackathon and *Data Science Meets Music Law* exhibition were featured in **Teaching Matters** (p. 17), recognising our commitment to transformative, experiential learning. These initiatives demonstrate how the Lab blends research, creativity, and pedagogy to deepen understanding of law, data, and technology.

Sharing knowledge widely



NOODL Licence "How-To" Video Released

To support broader adoption of equitable data licensing practices, we released a public **"how-to" video** on the NOODL Licence. The resource provides clear, accessible guidance on applying the licence in research and innovation settings, extending the practical reach of our work.

Graduations 2025

LLM in intellectual property law



Zahra Patel
Dissertation title:
Well-known" as in well-known trade marks : the scope of well-known marks protection in South Africa and other jurisdictions



Balehlogonolo Baloyi

Dissertation title:

Addressing the role of internet intermediaries and other stakeholders in the online counterfeit market in South Africa: Lessons from selected jurisdictions



Darren Smith

Dissertation title:

Patent quality and patent system in South Africa and selected foreign jurisdictions

On the horizon

Looking ahead to 2026: Events, Initiatives, and Opportunities to Collaborate

Building on a year of impactful research, policy engagement, and innovation, the Data Science Law Lab enters 2026 with exciting initiatives on the horizon. From upcoming conferences and public events to opportunities for partnerships, the year ahead promises opportunities to explore emerging challenges, co-create solutions, and shape Africa's technological and legal futures.

Project Launch: Catalyzing AI's Potential in Africa

We are excited to launch our new project, **"Catalyzing AI's Potential in Africa through Intellectual Property Innovation"**, alongside the report *State of Intellectual Property Governance of AI in Africa*. The launch will showcase how IP frameworks can be leveraged to support inclusive, responsible AI across the continent. Policymakers, regulators, academics, and innovators will engage in discussions on practical reforms, licensing models, and data stewardship to enable Africa's AI ecosystems.



Click HERE to register and learn more

2026 Africa, Law & [Emerging] Technologies Policy Hackathon

Our signature **Africa, Law & [Emerging] Technologies Policy Hackathon** returns in 2026! This interdisciplinary event brings together researchers, policymakers, students, and practitioners to tackle pressing legal and policy challenges at the intersection of technology, innovation, and society. Participants will co-create solutions to ensure AI and emerging technologies advance inclusive and equitable development across Africa.

Africa, Law & Emerging Technologies
POLICY HACKATHON

Click HERE to register and learn more

Join our team: Student vacancies

We are looking for motivated University of Pretoria students to contribute to exciting projects, including the Catalyzing AI Project and the uOttawa-led Canada–Africa Partnership on Intellectual Property (CAP on IP) for Climate Action project. These opportunities allow students to engage in policy research, data analysis, and innovation projects that shape Africa's technological and legal landscapes.



Click HERE to apply and learn more

Thank you to our team, funders, sponsors, collaborators and everyone who has worked with us and/or supported our work.
We look forward to more impact in the year ahead.
All the best for the holidays.

DATA SCIENCE LAW LAB

Learn more and keep in touch:

Data Science Law Lab: www.datasciencelawlab.africa

LinkedIn: @Data Science Law Lab

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@Datasciencelawlab

X: @datalawafrica

Email: research@datasciencelawlab.africa