

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Unpacking the potential of Artificial Intelligence to accelerate youth development in Africa.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly recognized as a transformative force in global development, with potential to reshape youth development in Africa. The [African Union \(AU\) Digital Transformation Strategy For Africa](#) underscores the pivotal role of digital technologies, including AI, in accelerating the continent's growth and addressing its unique challenges. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is more than a technological leap; it is a transformative force with profound impacts and revolutionary changes in economics, society, and geopolitics, healthcare, agriculture, finance, and education among other key sectors. If applied judiciously, AI could also play a critical role in fostering industrialisation, accelerating access to jobs, better government services, health and education, and more importantly, in managing climate crises,

The African Union recently adopted the [African Union AI Continental Strategy](#), an instrumental framework in shaping Africa's approach to AI innovation. The AI Strategy aligns with AU's inclusive development aspirations as well as its core values. Guided by the principles of ethics, inclusion and diversity, human rights and human dignity, people's well-being, peace and prosperity, it prioritises the development and adaptation of AI systems to Africa's context. The strategy puts forward an Africa-centric, development-oriented and inclusive approach around five focus areas notably: harnessing AI's benefits; building AI capabilities; minimising risks; stimulating investment; and fostering cooperation. It sets out a common vision for the Continent and identifies key policy interventions to enable the continent to harness the huge potential of AI while addressing the societal, ethical, security and legal challenges associated with AI-driven transformations.

The Office of the African Union Chairperson's Special Envoy on Youth is set to release a Policy brief highlighting the potential of AI to accelerate youth development in Africa. The "[Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) for Sustainable Youth Development in Africa](#)" Policy Brief examines the current AI landscape, identifying key challenges, and proposing actionable recommendations. The policy brief will give pointers to policymakers, development practitioners, and other stakeholders about the opportunities and strategies to harness AI for the benefit of African youth. The policy brief looks at critical areas focused on investment in base infrastructure which

is crucial for digitalisation and AI uptake; inclusion of young people in the adoption and enforcement of legislation and regulatory frameworks; fostering Public-Private Partnerships; and education and digital skills development for the African youth population.

Here are the key highlights of the AI Policy Brief:

1. **Strategic Insights:** The brief offers an in-depth analysis of how AI technologies can be applied to address key challenges in education and skills development, agriculture, health and trade.
2. **Policy Recommendations:** It provides actionable recommendations for policymakers, aimed at integrating AI solutions into national and regional development plans to maximize their impact on Agenda 2063 aspirations.
3. **Proposed Actions:** The document outlines practical actions for stakeholders to effectively deploy and manage AI technologies, ensuring they contribute positively to Africa's development objectives.
4. **Alignment with AU Instruments:** The policy brief aligns with critical AU frameworks including the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024), reinforcing the continent's commitment to a tech-driven future.
5. **Best Practice:** Examples of best practice implemented on the continent to shed knowledge on efforts to integrate technology into sustainable development and inspire innovation.

The policy brief will be released on 20th September 2024 at the United Nations Summit of the Future Action Day. AU's Youth Envoy Ms. Chido Mpemba observes that the brief focuses on the urgency to harness AI to drive economic growth, enhance governance, and achieve sustainable development for youth across the continent. She notes that "harnessing the power of AI is not just about technological advancement; it is about creating a sustainable future for Africa. The policy brief is a crucial step towards that future."

The policy brief on AI for sustainable youth development in Africa is part of the African Union's collaborative effort in driving innovation through the AU Make Africa Digital (MAD) initiative. The MAD initiative ran in partnership with Google and the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) is implemented under the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2030 which envisions an "integrated and inclusive digital society and economy in Africa that improves the quality of life of Africa's citizens".

The MAD initiative, launched in 2023 has been domesticated in six countries - Ethiopia, Madagascar, Ghana, South Sudan, Senegal and Zambia, reaching over 4000 young Africans with innovative skills to leverage the digital economy.

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