Issue 02 2025

AFRICA'S TECH PULSE

TICON AFRICA CONFERENCE:
There was action aplenty in Accra!

TICON AFRICA

TAKE CHARGE OF AFRICA'S A.I. DESTINY

AFRICA'S WOMEN IN I.C.T.

BREAKING TECH'S GLASS CEILING!

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CAPTURING THE ENERGY, IDEAS AND MOMENTUM FROM ACCRA

It is a privilege to welcome you to the second edition of *Africa's Tech Pulse*, the official magazine of the Technology Information Confederation Africa (TICON Africa). This publication continues to reflect our shared commitment to advancing Africa's digital transformation through professional excellence, collaboration and innovation.

Since our inaugural issue, TICON Africa has made significant progress in strengthening the voice and capacity of ICT professionals across the continent.

Our recent joint conference with the African Marketing Confederation (AMC), held in Accra, Ghana, brought together over 500 delegates from across Africa and beyond. Under the theme '*Empowering Africa's Tech Future: Innovation, Standards, and Global Influence*', the event underscored the importance of aligning technology with trade, education and inclusive development.

The conference featured high-level plenaries, breakout sessions and exhibitions that showcased African innovation across sectors.

We were inspired by the insights of pioneers like Professor Nii Narku Quaynor, widely recognised as the father of the internet in Africa, who reminded us that Africa must not only consume technology but build it by ourselves, for ourselves. We celebrated the Women in TICON Africa Chapter, whose work continues to elevate the role of women in technology.

A defining moment was the closing keynote by Professor Fred McBagonluri, who emphasised a threefold strategy for Africa's growth: acquiring knowledge, building trust and driving innovation. He reminded us that Africa's most valuable asset is its youth, and that transforming education, strengthening institutions, and fostering homegrown innovation are essential to unlocking our full potential.

The conference also marked the launch of collaborative initiatives between academia, industry and government, and the awarding of scholarships by the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) to support postgraduate studies in emerging technologies. These efforts reflect our commitment to building a digitally skilled and globally competitive workforce.

As part of our commitment to expanding our network, we were pleased to formally welcome new national associations into the TICON Africa family. Membership certificates were presented to the National ICT Professionals Associations of Cape Verde, Tanzania, Nigeria and Togo – affirming our shared vision for a unified and empowered digital Africa.

This edition of *Africa's Tech Pulse* captures the energy, ideas and momentum generated in Accra. I invite you to engage with the stories in this issue and join us in building a unified, innovative, and future-ready Africa.

David Gowu
President
Technology Information Confederation Africa

PLEASE JOIN WITH US IN BUILDING A UNIFIED, INNOVATIVE & FUTURE -READY CONTINENT

CAPTURANDO A ENERGIA, AS IDEIAS E O IMPULSO DE ACRA

É um privilégio dar a todos boas-vindas à segunda edição da Africa's Tech Pulse, a revista oficial da Technology Information Confederation Africa (TICON Africa). Esta publicação continua a reflectir o nosso compromisso partilhado em promover a transformação digital de África através da excelência profissional, da colaboração e da inovação.

Desde a nossa primeira edição, a TICON Africa tem feito progressos significativos no fortalecimento da voz e da capacidade dos profissionais de TIC em todo o continente.

A nossa recente conferência conjunta com a Confederação Africana de Marketing (AMC), realizada em Acra, Gana, reuniu mais de 500 delegados de toda a África e de outros continentes. Sob o tema '*Capacitando o Futuro Tecnológico da África': 'Inovação, Padrões e Influência Global'*, o evento destacou a importância de alinhar a tecnologia ao comércio, à educação e ao desenvolvimento inclusivo..

A conferência contou com plenárias de alto nível, sessões paralelas e exposições que apresentaram a inovação africana em diversos sectores.

Fomos inspirados pelas ideias de pioneiros como o Professor Nii Narku Quaynor, amplamente reconhecido como o pai da internet na África, que nos lembrou que a África não deve apenas consumir tecnologia, mas construí-la por si mesma, para si mesma. Comemoramos o capítulo africano da Women in TICON, cujo trabalho continua a elevar o papel das mulheres na tecnologia.

Um momento decisivo foi o discurso de encerramento do Professor Fred McBagonluri, que enfatizou uma estratégia tríplice para o crescimento da África: adquirir conhecimento, construir confiança e impulsionar a inovação. Ele nos lembrou que o bem mais valioso da África é a sua juventude e que transformar a educação, fortalecer as instituições e fomentar a inovação local são essenciais para desbloquear todo o nosso potencial.

A conferência também marcou o lançamento de iniciativas de colaboração entre a academia, a indústria e o governo, bem como a atribuição de bolsas de estudo pela Federação Internacional para o Processamento da Informação (IFIP) para apoiar estudos de pós-graduação em tecnologias emergentes. Esses esforços reflectem o nosso compromisso em construir uma força de trabalho digitalmente qualificada e globalmente competitiva.

Como parte do nosso compromisso em expandir nossa rede, tivemos o prazer de dar as boas-vindas formais a novas associações nacionais à família TICON Africa. Foram entregues certificados de filiação às Associações Nacionais de Profissionais de TIC de Cabo Verde, Tanzânia, Nigéria e Togo, reafirmando nossa visão partilhada de uma África digital unificada e fortalecida.

Esta edição da*Africa's Tech Pulse* captura a energia, as ideias e o dinamismo gerados em Acra. Convido-o a envolver-se com as histórias desta edição e a juntar-se a nós na construção de uma África unificada, inovadora e preparada para o futuro.

David Gowu
Presidente
Informações sobre tecnologia
Confederação Africana

JUNTE-SE A NÓS NA CONSTRUÇÃO DE UM CONTINENTE UNIFICADO, INOVADOR E PREPARADO PARA O FUTURO

FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION CONFEDERATION AFRICA

YOUR UNWAVERING PARTNERSHIP AND DEDICATION FORESHADOWS A VERY BRIGHT 2026

Dear members, colleagues and friends of TICON Africa, the remarkable progress achieved in 2025 stands as a testament to the collective energy and commitment driving TICON Africa forward. Our Confederation has expanded from 11 to 16 member countries, a significant 45% increase in continental participation, reflecting growing confidence in our shared mission to unify and professionalise Africa's ICT community.

The 2025 TICON Africa Conference in Accra marked a milestone in collaboration, bringing together representatives from across the continent to shape a common vision for Africa's digital future. Building on this momentum, two major research initiatives, '*Mapping Women's Representation and Leadership in ICT Across Africa: A Continental Baseline Study*' and '*A Pan-African Review of ICT Laws and Compliance Readiness*', are now under way, each designed to generate insights that will inform policy and strengthen capacity across all regions.

Further advancing our mandate, the TICON Africa Job Portal is nearing completion. It will connect ICT professionals and employers while linking opportunities to verified credentials and ongoing professional development.

MASTERCLASS SERIES TO CONTINUE DURING 2026

Alongside this, our Masterclass Series on ICT Compliance, Agentic AI, Cybersecurity, and Digital Workforce Development will continue throughout 2026, fostering practical skills and leadership across member countries.

TICON Africa is also preparing to operate as a continent-wide ICT Certification Body, aligned with international standards such as ISO/IEC 17024, a decisive step toward establishing continental benchmarks for professional recognition and mobility.

Looking ahead to the 2026 Tri-Conference in Livingstone, Zambia, I extend my sincere appreciation to all member countries for your unwavering dedication and partnership.

May the forthcoming festive season bring peace, renewal and reflection as we enter a new year of shared innovation and progress. Together, we continue to build Africa's digital future, shaping its destiny one partnership, one programme and one professional at a time.

Warm regards,

Dr Jannie Zaaiman
Secretary-General, TICON Africa

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES WITH RESPECTIVE ANNUAL FEES;

PRIVATE COMPANY/ GOVERNMENT BODIES/ NGOS	PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP	STUDENTS MEMBERSHIP
UGX 2 million	UGX 200,000	UGX 20,000

BANK DETAILS

Account Name: ICT Association of Uganda
Account Number: 1040006744842
Bank Name: Housing Finance Bank
Branch: Ntinda
Swift Code: HFINUGKA
Currency: UGX

DE LA PART DU SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL DE TICON AFRICA

VOTRE PARTENARIAT ET VOTRE DÉVOUEMENT SANS FAILLE LAISSENT PRÉSAGER UNE ANNÉE 2026 TRÈS PROMETTEUSE

Chers membres, collègues et amis de TICON Africa, les progrès remarquables accomplis en 2025 témoignent de l'énergie et de l'engagement collectifs qui font progresser TICON Africa. Notre Confédération est passée de 11 à 16 pays membres, soit une augmentation significative de 45 % de la participation continentale, reflétant la confiance croissante dans notre mission commune d'unifier et de professionnaliser la communauté TIC africaine.

La conférence TICON Africa 2025 à Accra a marqué une étape importante en matière de collaboration, réunissant des représentants de tout le continent pour définir une vision commune de l'avenir numérique de l'Afrique. S'appuyant sur cette dynamique, deux initiatives de recherche majeures, « *Cartographie de la représentation et du leadership des femmes dans les TIC en Afrique : une étude de référence continentale* » et « *Examen panafricain des lois relatives aux TIC et de l'état de préparation à leur mise en conformité* », sont actuellement en cours, chacune étant conçue pour générer des connaissances qui éclaireront les politiques et renforceront les capacités dans toutes les régions.

Pour poursuivre la réalisation de notre mission, le portail emploi TICON Africa est en voie d'achèvement. Il permettra de mettre en relation les professionnels des TIC et les employeurs tout en associant les opportunités à des certifications vérifiées et à un développement professionnel continu.

LA SÉRIE DE MASTERCLASSES SE POURSUIVRA EN 2026

Parallèlement, notre série de masterclasses sur la conformité TIC, notamment l'IA agentique, la cybersécurité et le développement de la main-d'œuvre numérique, se poursuivra tout au long de l'année 2026, ce qui permettra de renforcer les compétences pratiques et le leadership dans les pays membres.

TICON Africa se prépare également à fonctionner comme un organisme de certification TIC à l'échelle du continent, aligné sur des normes internationales telles que l'ISO/IEC 17024, une étape décisive vers l'établissement de références continentales pour la reconnaissance et la mobilité professionnelles.

En prévision de la Conférence trilatérale de 2026 à Livingstone, en Zambie, j'adresse mes sincères remerciements à tous les pays membres pour leur dévouement et leur partenariat sans faille.

Que les fêtes de fin d'année à venir apportent paix, renouveau et réflexion, alors que nous entrons dans une nouvelle année d'innovation et de progrès partagés. Ensemble, nous continuons à bâtir l'avenir numérique de l'Afrique, en façonnant son destin, un partenariat, un programme et un professionnel à la fois.

Cordialement,

Dr Jannie Zaaiman
Secrétaire général, TICON Africa

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- ICT Association of Malawi (ICTAM)
- ICT Association of Uganda (ICTAU)
- Information Communication Technology Association of Kenya (ICTAK)
- Information and Communications Technology Association of Zambia (ICTAZ)
- Information Communication Technology Association of Zimbabwe
- Institute of ICT Professionals Ghana (IIPGH)
- Núcleo Operacional da Sociedade de Informação (NOSi), Cape Verde
- Lesotho Information and Communication Technology Association (LICTA)
- Nigeria Computer Society
- Rwanda ICT Chamber
- South African ICT Association (SAICTA)
- Tanzania Computer Society
- TogoTech

ISSUE 2 2025

CONTENTS

OUR COVER STORIES

14 2025 CONFERENCE
There was action aplenty at our TICON Africa conference in Accra, Ghana! Catch up on the magical moments

38 WOMEN IN TICON
A proud chapter of dynamic African women ICT professionals who are breaking tech's glass ceiling

56 A.I. ETHICS
We must train AI models by embedding the wisdom of local cultures, languages and religious traditions

OUR FEATURE STORIES

8 THIS IS TICON AFRICA
Introducing TICON Africa as the powerful and united voice of ICT professionals across our emerging continent

10 TICON AFRICA NEWS
TICON Africa continues to build the institutional pillars that will sustain collaboration, ethics and inclusion

12 JOBS, JOBS, JOBS
Our job portal will connect talent, verify excellence and mobilise expertise to create a trusted professional ecosystem

24 FUN TIMES
Beyond the conference halls, TICON Africa 2025 hosted many fun and unforgettable social events

26 2025 AWARDS NIGHT
TICON Africa acknowledged the continent's top ICT achievers for 2025 at a glittering gala dinner in Accra

30 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
Professor Nii Narku Quaynor, Ghanaian scientist and engineer, honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award

32 AWARD WINNER
Meet Samuel Chiwanda, winner of our hotly contested ICT Professional of the Year Award at the 2025 conference

34 2026 HOSTS
Zambia is confirmed as the host nation for next year's African ICT, marketing and supply chain gatherings

37 AWARD NOMINATIONS
Get ready for the 2026 edition of this prestigious continental celebration of tech leadership and innovation

42 MEMBER NEWS: BOTSWANA
The Botswana Information Technology Society (BITS) has officially introduced its Women in ICT Chapter

44 MASTERCLASS SERIES
The second Women in TICON Masterclass Series discussed Building Executive Presence and Personal Branding

46 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
Ghana is not just participating in Africa's digital future, but helping to shape the transformation

50 EDUCATION
Challenges persist, but technology can boost African education by improving literacy, numeracy or teaching quality

52 MEMBER NEWS: TOGO
Thirteen local startups in Togo recently united their voices to establish industry body TogoTech

54 MEMBER NEWS: RWANDA
Rwanda's is committed to embracing technology on its journey to becoming a knowledge-based economy

59 MASTERCLASS SERIES
Guest Chris Wiggett explored the rise of intelligent systems redefining possibilities on the African continent

64 EMOTIONAL IMPACT
Gen AI's most valuable outcomes will be from empowering people to do more, feel more and relate more to others

68 DIGITAL MARKETING
A practitioner's perspective on leveraging data analytics and AI to drive decision-making in digital marketing

70 CREATE A BUSINESS
Every successful AI-driven business begins by solving a real, tangible problem. But move fast

71 HARNESSING A.I.
A recent pan-African study examines the transformative power of artificial intelligence across Africa

72 ENERGY ACCESS
The new Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project can drive universal electrification in the country

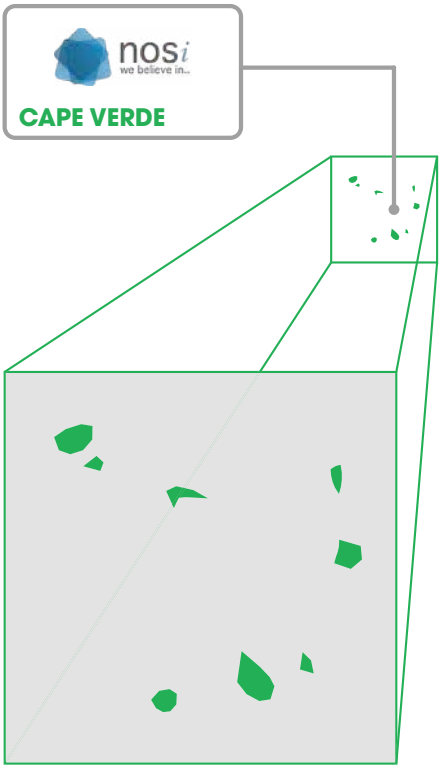
NEXT ISSUE:
- The rise of the digital naives
- AI on the farm: Towards delivering zero hunger

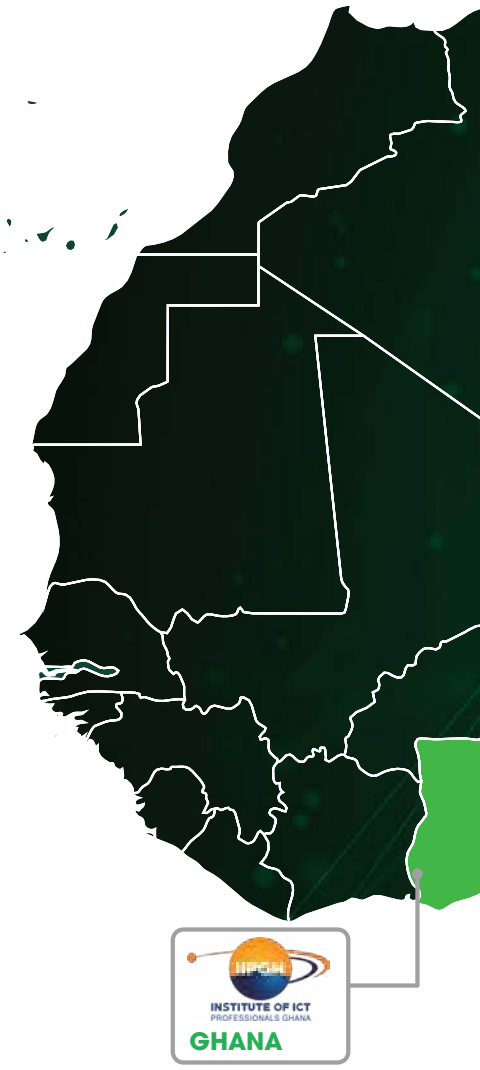
PRIMARY MEMBERS

Primary member organisations are key players in their respective countries, serving as pivotal figures in local technology ecosystems. They drive innovation, foster collaboration and champion the development of ICT professionals, playing a crucial role in shaping both TICON Africa and the broader ICT landscape.

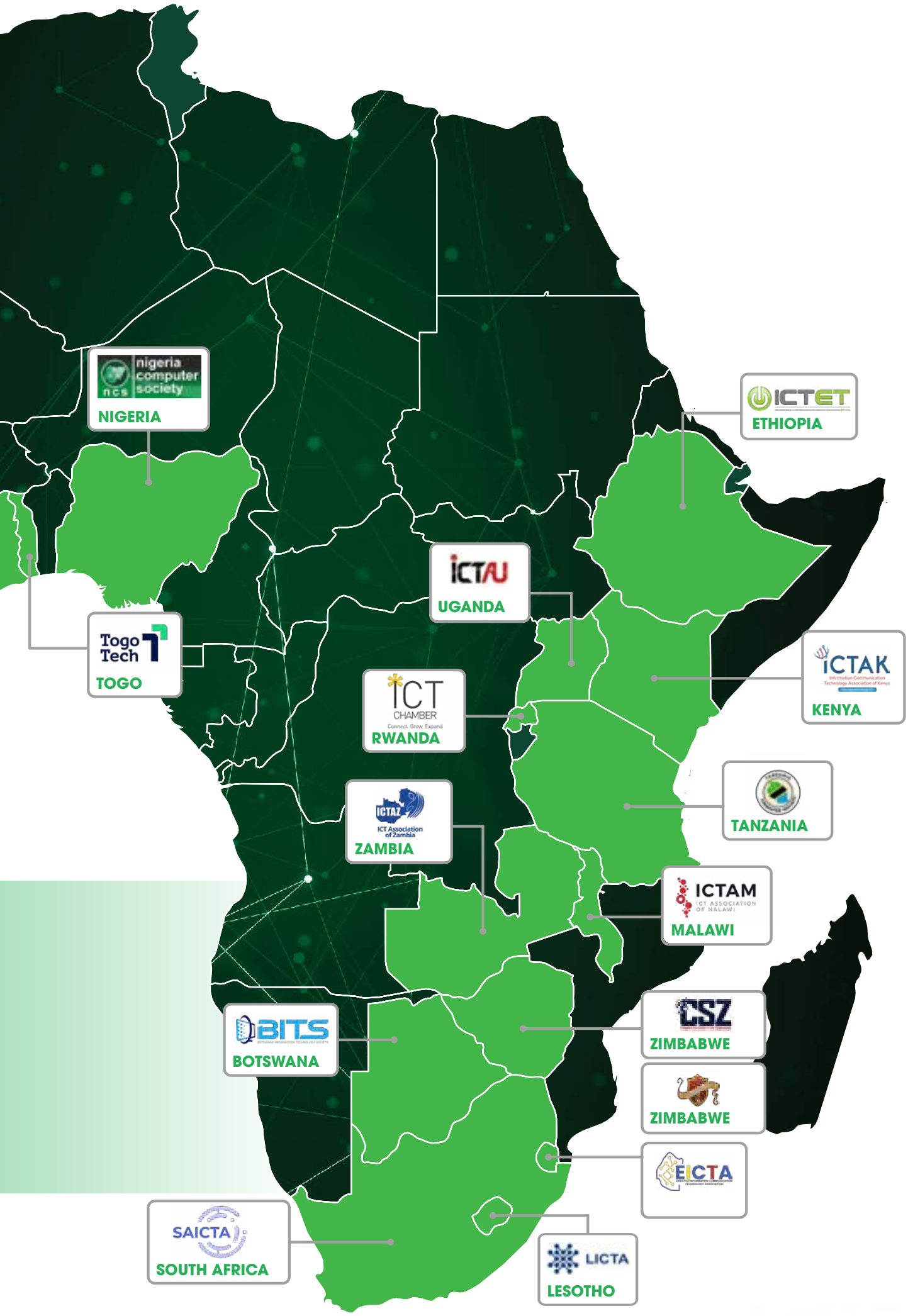
SECONDARY MEMBERS

Secondary membership represents the dynamic influx of new energy and ideas into TICON Africa from a constantly evolving industry, offering diverse perspectives, innovative approaches, and a hunger for knowledge and growth.





TICON AFRICA
OUR MEMBER BODIES


NIGERIA
ETHIOPIA
UGANDA
TOGO
KENYA
RWANDA
TANZANIA
ZAMBIA
MALAWI
BOTSWANA
ZIMBABWE
ZIMBABWE
SOUTH AFRICA
LESOTHO

BUILDING AFRICA'S DIGITAL FUTURE: THREE CHAPTERS DRIVE CHANGE ACROSS TICON AFRICA

As Africa's march towards a digital future accelerates, TICON Africa continues to build the institutional pillars that will sustain collaboration, ethics and inclusion going forward.

PHOTO: MICROSOFT COPILOT; ADOBE

TICON Africa's President, David Gowu, is clear about the role technology should play on the African continent. "Technology is only as powerful as the people behind it – and Africa's people are ready," he says.

A people-centric approach is paramount, and the rollout of three vital Chapters of the organisation confirms this. The three transformative Chapters at the heart of TICON Africa's architecture are Women in TICON Africa, Youth in TICON Africa and a Compliance Chapter. Each shapes an essential dimension of the continent's landscape – and each should be considered an engine of transformation, not an administrative sub-unit.

The Chapters connect policy to practice, and vision to opportunity. They also connect individuals to the broader digital ecosystem.

WOMEN IN TICON CHAPTER

This Chapter focuses on leadership, representation and digital inclusion. Read more about our Women in TICON activities on page 38.

Flagship initiative: Mapping Women's Representation and Leadership in ICT Across Africa – a continental baseline study across 20 countries.

The Women in TICON Africa chapter has emerged as a powerful catalyst for gender equality and leadership in ICT. Guided by the conviction that digital transformation must be inclusive, the chapter is producing the first continental study documenting women's participation and leadership in Africa's ICT sector.

Beyond research, the chapter is finalising its offering of mentorship circles, masterclasses and leadership exchanges, nurturing emerging talent and celebrating established role models. Its work echoes the African Union's '*Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030)*', translating policy aspirations into real

pathways for empowerment and professional recognition.

YOUTH IN TICON CHAPTER

This Chapter focuses on innovation, skills and future leadership.

Flagship initiative: TICON Africa Youth Innovation Challenge – an annual competition celebrating creativity and socially relevant tech solutions.

The Youth in TICON Africa Chapter embodies the continent's greatest resource – its young people. It offers a structured platform where students, graduates and early-career innovators connect with mentors, entrepreneurs and policymakers.

Through partnerships with universities and member bodies, the chapter integrates youth into the TICON Africa Job Portal, enabling career mobility, internships and entrepreneurship support.

Its programmes promote digital ethics, innovation and leadership, ensuring that Africa's youth are not merely trained for employment but inspired to create new opportunities across the digital economy.

THE COMPLIANCE CHAPTER

This Chapter focuses on trust, ethics and digital governance.

Flagship initiative: Strengthening Africa's Digital Foundations: A Pan-African Review of ICT Laws and Compliance Readiness.

As digital systems expand, so too does the need for a trusted, ethical and harmonised legal environment. The Compliance Chapter leads TICON Africa's efforts to strengthen privacy, cybersecurity and ICT regulation awareness across all member states.

Its ongoing research explores legislative maturity, adoption of the African Union's Malabo Convention to address cybercrime and data protection, and national readiness to implement robust data-protection and cybersecurity frameworks.

The Chapter is also building a Continental Compliance Toolkit, practical guidance, training modules, and resources for both public and private-sector professionals.

Through these efforts, it positions Africa not as a passive adopter of global rules but as a standard-setter in digital governance and champion of digital sovereignty.

ONE VISION, THREE PILLARS

Together, the three Chapters form the human foundation of TICON Africa's digital transformation agenda:

These chapters complement TICON Africa's broader initiatives, including the continent-wide ICT Certification Body (aligned with ISO/IEC 17024), the TICON Africa Masterclass Series and the Job Portal, all designed to promote professionalism, ethics and opportunity.

LOOKING AHEAD: CHAPTERS TO BE CENTRE STAGE IN 2026

As preparations intensify for three continental conferences to be held in Livingstone, Zambia, in 2026 – bringing together TICON Africa, the African Marketing Confederation, and the Africa Supply Chain Conference (ASCON) – it's envisaged that the chapters will take centre stage in demonstrating how collaboration across gender, generations and governance builds a resilient digital continent.

Through the Women, Compliance and Youth Chapters, TICON Africa continues to prove that digital progress and human development go hand in hand, creating a connected, secure and inclusive Africa that leads with purpose and integrity.

ABOUT TICON AFRICA

The Technology Information Confederation Africa (TICON Africa) is the continental professional body uniting ICT associations and experts across Africa.

With member representation in 16 countries, it promotes professional standards, ethical practice and collaboration through research, certification, education and events.

Its vision is simple yet bold: to pioneer Africa's tech future through innovation, trust and shared growth. ●

Chapter	Core focus	Continental impact
Women in TICON Africa	Representation, empowerment, leadership	Building an inclusive digital workforce
Youth in TICON Africa	Skills, innovation, leadership	Empowering the next generation of ICT professionals
Compliance	Trust, regulation, cybersecurity	Strengthening governance and digital confidence

PLANS TO LAUNCH CONTINENTAL I.C.T. JOB PORTAL UNVEILED

The job portal aims to connect talent, verify excellence and mobilise expertise, creating a trusted professional ecosystem for Africa.

As Africa enters a new digital era, access to verified, professional and opportunity-driven networks has become essential to unlocking the continent's human potential.

TICON Africa is responding to this need through the upcoming launch of the TICON Africa Job Portal, a flagship initiative that will transform how ICT professionals, graduates and employers connect across the continent.

A BRIDGE CONNECTING OPPORTUNITY AND TALENT

The TICON Africa Job Portal will serve as a continental platform for professional visibility, matching people with jobs, and facilitating skills mobility. It will link verified professionals, companies and national ICT bodies into one integrated digital ecosystem, creating a trusted space where talent meets opportunity.

The platform is being developed as part of TICON Africa's broader mission to pioneer Africa's tech future by professionalising the ICT industry through certification, research, compliance and career development initiatives. The portal will support TICON Africa's members and partner bodies in more than 16 African countries, enabling professionals to publish verified profiles, access accredited vacancies and connect with employers across borders.

Unlike conventional job boards, the TICON Africa Job Portal goes beyond listings. It will integrate with TICON Africa's professional membership, certification and research frameworks, providing users with a 360-degree career identity and combining verified qualifications, certifications, affiliations and work experience under one continental profile.

TRUST THROUGH VERIFICATION

At the heart of the Job Portal lies one of our confederation's most innovative research projects: the Pan-African ICT Qualification and Verification Study.

Recognising the growing challenge of fraudulent qualifications and unverifiable experience records, TICON Africa has embarked on a continent-wide study to establish a reliable, transparent and standardised verification system for ICT qualifications.

This initiative explores international and regional best practices in academic and professional verification from the models used by verification agencies in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana, to global frameworks such as the European Diploma Supplement and World Education Services.

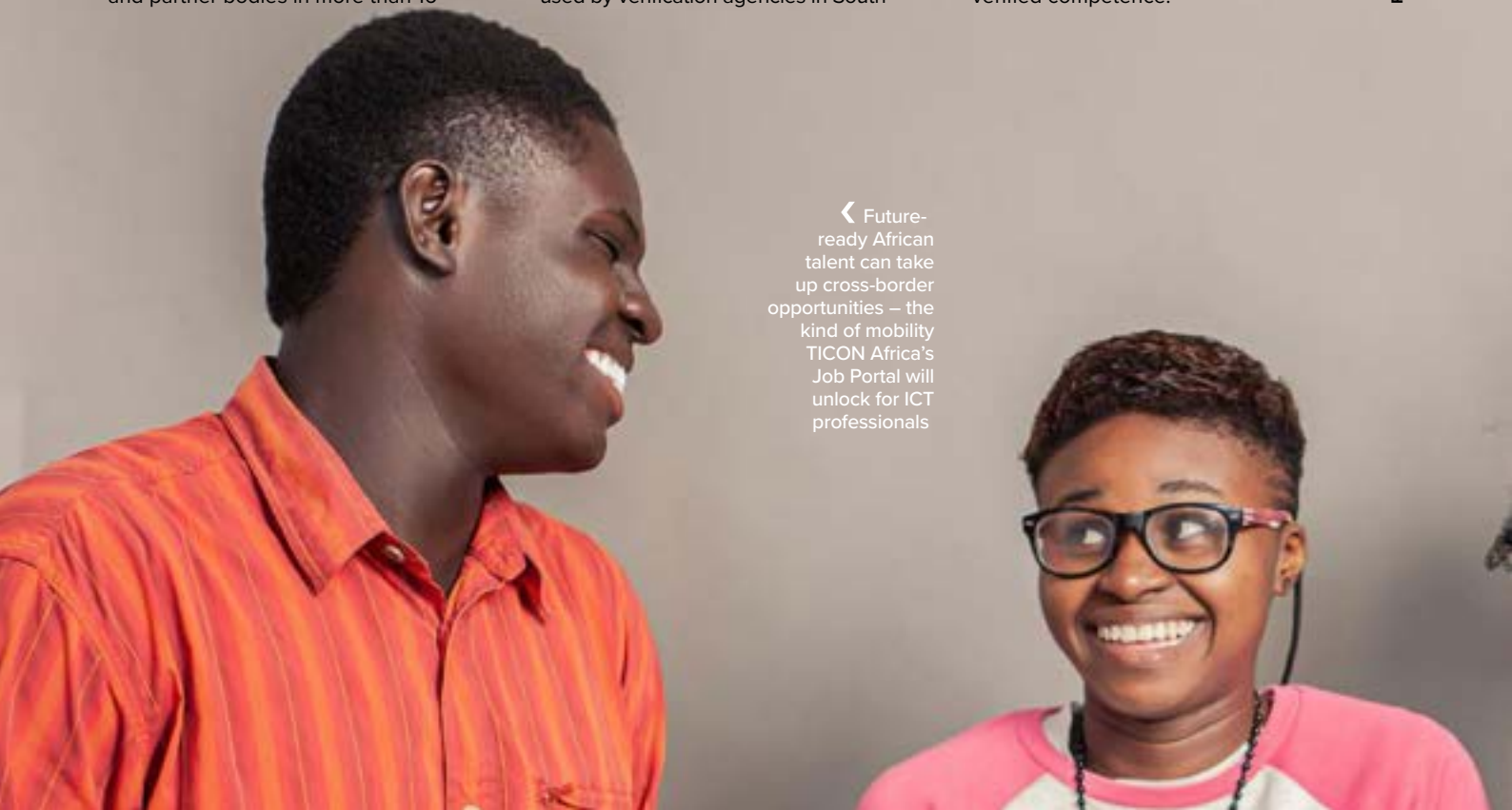
The goal is to develop a TICON Verification Framework, a unified continental model that national professional bodies can adopt and integrate into their membership systems.

The verification process will include multiple layers of confirmation:

- **Academic verification**, ensuring authenticity of tertiary qualifications through recognised institutions and education registries.
- **Professional certification verification**, confirming credentials issued by TICON Africa and entities such as CompTIA, BCS or national ICT bodies.
- **Employment and experience verification**, validating job history, project roles and technical skills through a network of registered referees and institutional partners.

By embedding these verification checks into the Job Portal, TICON Africa aims to create a trusted digital labour market, where employers can confidently recruit, and professionals can proudly showcase verified competence.

PHOTO: TEAM CONNECTO/UNSPLASH



‹ Future-ready African talent can take up cross-border opportunities – the kind of mobility TICON Africa's Job Portal will unlock for ICT professionals

MOBILISATION OF AFRICA'S EXPERTISE

In parallel with the Job Portal, TICON Africa is investigating the feasibility of establishing an African Expertise Alliance, a continental mechanism to mobilise African expertise for advisory, mentorship and professional service delivery.

The proposed alliance aims to ensure that Africa's knowledge capital – from retired specialists to active consultants – is organised, accessible and deployed in support of national and regional development priorities.

Tier 1: Mobilising retired and philanthropic expertise

Tier 1 focuses on advisory, mentoring and capacity-building contributions from senior professionals. It comprises two subsets:

- Retired and semi-retired professionals: experienced individuals offering strategic guidance, institutional strengthening and mentorship.
- Philanthropic expertise contributors: active professionals and academics volunteering part of their time for community-based or developmental ICT projects.

This tier seeks to preserve institutional memory and encourage cross-generational knowledge transfer, allowing Africa's seasoned experts to remain active contributors to digital transformation.

Tier 2: Professional referral and support network

While Tier 1 centres on advisory engagement, Tier 2 establishes the alliance's active professional referral platform, a structured database of accredited consultants, firms and practitioners who can be independently contracted by governments, corporations or development agencies for project implementation and specialist consulting work.

The Professional Referral and Support Network will function as a continent-wide registry and referral system, providing a verified pool of qualified African professionals and companies across key sectors. Each registered member will maintain an up-to-date profile showcasing expertise, credentials and experience, creating a trusted marketplace for sourcing home-grown technical talent.

Importantly, the alliance's role in Tier 2 will be limited to maintaining and verifying the database. It will not engage in negotiations, contracting or project management. Access will be offered on a membership or subscription basis, allowing institutions to contact listed professionals directly for assignments.

Through this model, the Professional Referral and Support Network will:

1. Provide access and credibility, offering a transparent, verified registry of African expertise.
2. Facilitate direct referrals, enabling clients to connect with experts or firms without intermediary control.
3. Promote sustainability, operating on a cost-recovery basis via registration and access fees that maintain quality assurance.

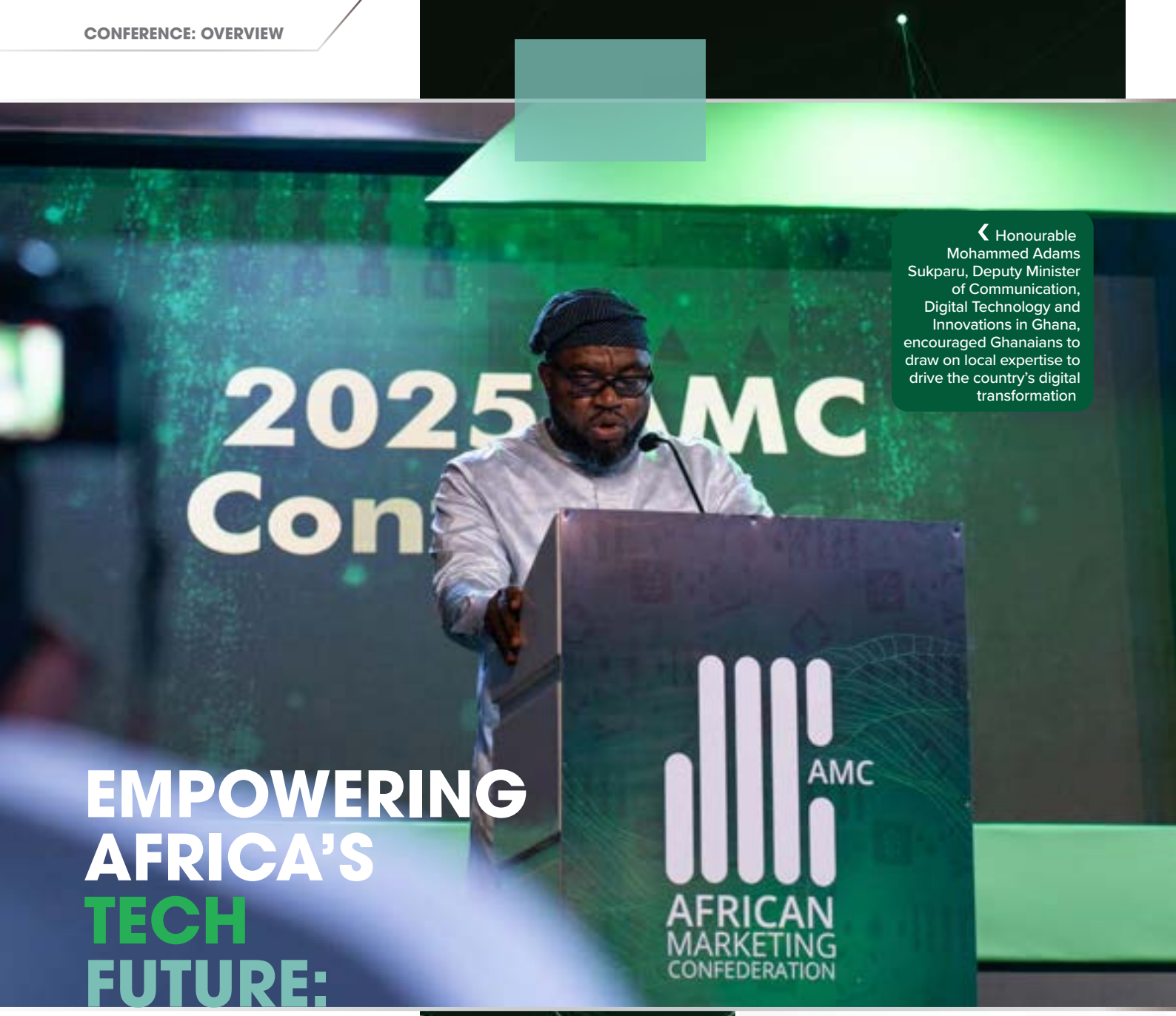
Tier 2, therefore, transforms the alliance into a gateway for African professional excellence, linking advisory wisdom (Tier 1) with execution capability (Tier 2), ensuring Africa's development is guided and delivered by its own people.

INTEGRATION WITH OUR BROADER ECOSYSTEM

The Job Portal and its related verification and expertise components form part of a larger vision for a Pan-African digital professional ecosystem. Alongside the TICON Africa Certification Framework (aligned with ISO/IEC 17024), the Compliance Toolkit and continental research on women's leadership in ICT, the portal completes a robust platform for professional development and governance.

Students and graduates from institutions such as Belgium Campus iTversity and members of national ICT associations will be among the first to be invited to populate the system. As the platform expands, it will become a continent-wide directory of verified ICT professionals, supporting workforce planning, research and talent export initiatives. Our philosophy: *We're building not just a job portal, but a trusted professional ecosystem for Africa*.

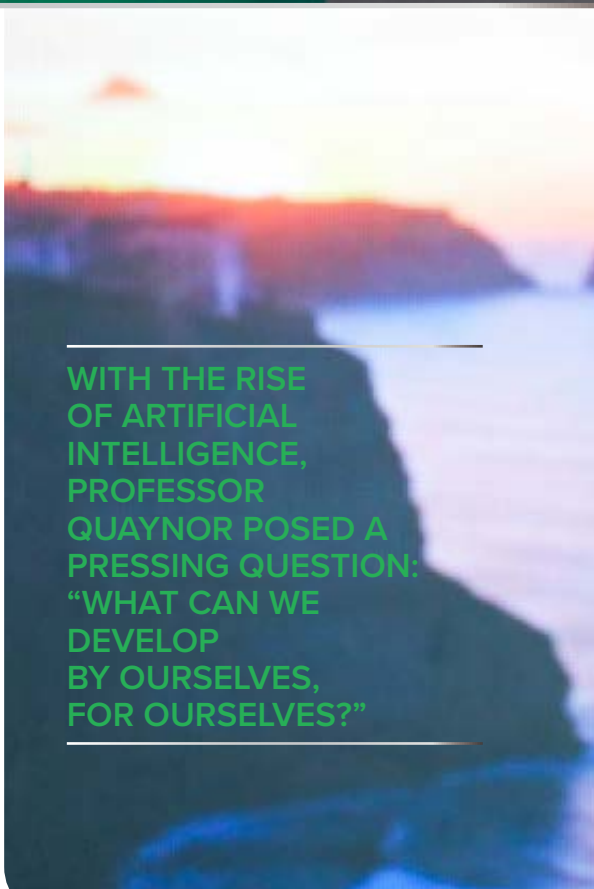
The Job Portal will be officially launched in May 2026. Our philosophy: *It marks the dawn of a new era where verified African excellence is no longer hidden, but visible, connected and empowered.*



Honourable Mohammed Adams Sukparu, Deputy Minister of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations in Ghana, encouraged Ghanaians to draw on local expertise to drive the country's digital transformation

EMPOWERING AFRICA'S TECH FUTURE: TICON AFRICA 2025

The recent TICON Africa Conference in Accra, Ghana underscored the need for even greater continental collaboration to achieve Africa's ambitious technological and developmental goals. By **Jannie Zaaiman**, **David Gowu** and **Fiona Zerbst**.



WITH THE RISE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, PROFESSOR QUAYNOR POSED A PRESSING QUESTION: "WHAT CAN WE DEVELOP BY OURSELVES, FOR OURSELVES?"

Great Ghanaians! David Gowu (President of TICON Africa – left) and Richard Kafui Amanfu (Executive Director of the Institute of ICT Professionals, Ghana – right) with Professor Amevi Acakpovi (Accra Technical University, Ghana)

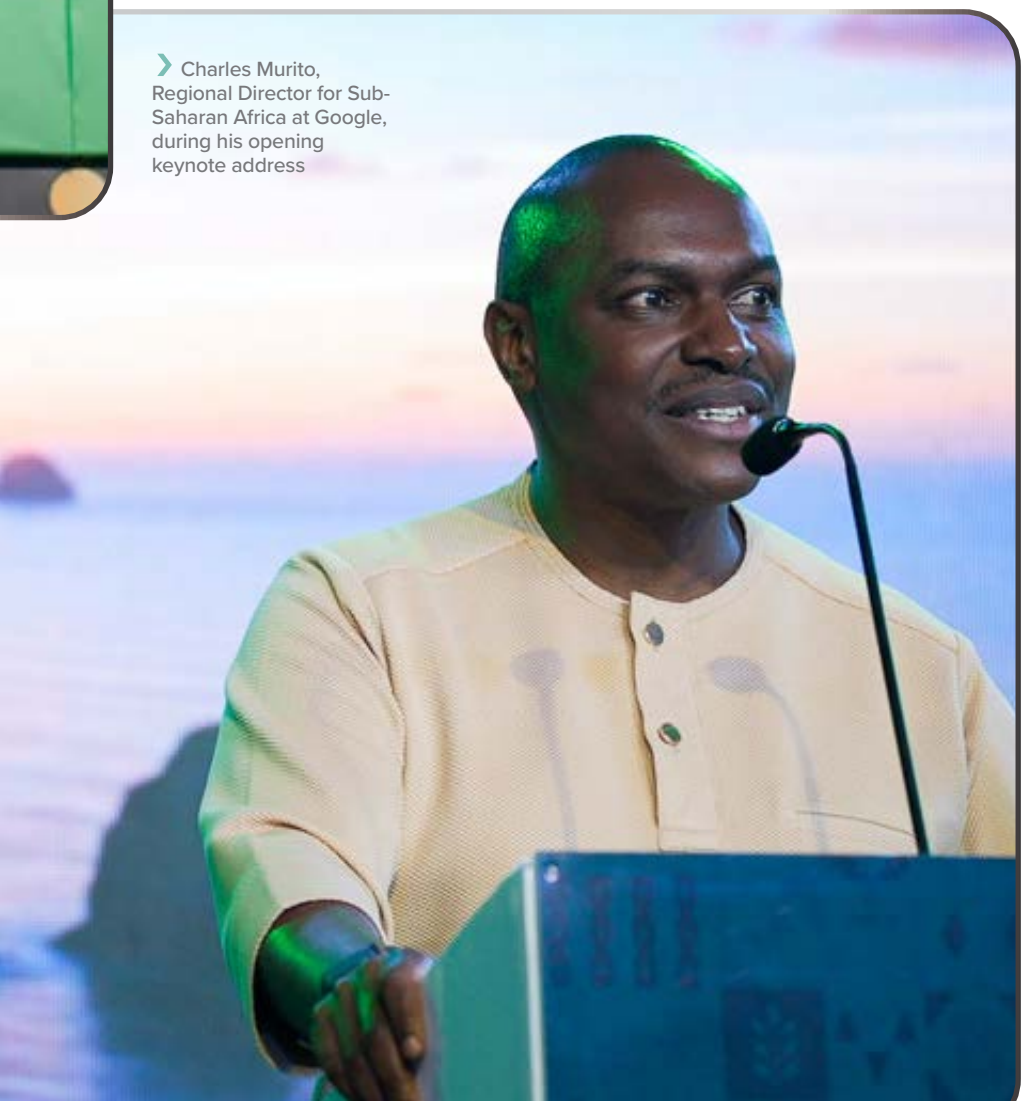
Africa's technology and business leaders, policymakers and – importantly – ICT students gathered on the vibrant shores of Labadi Beach in Accra in late August to network, share insights and debate hot topics.

Gathered under the unifying theme '*Empowering Africa's Tech Future – Innovation, Standards, and Global Influence*', the 2025 conference delivered a powerful blend of inclusivity, innovation and intellect.

The host, Richard Kafui Amanfu, Executive Director of the Institute of ICT Professionals Ghana (IIPGH), opened the proceedings with a welcome address and introduced David Gowu, President of TICON Africa, who outlined a strategic vision for Africa's digital future, emphasising regional collaboration, professional standards and global competitiveness.

He highlighted TICON Africa's growth, key initiatives, and Ghana's role in driving innovation across the continent.

Gowu then cited the development of the Ghana-UAE Tech and Innovation Hub in the Dawa Industrial Zone in Greater Accra, a US$1-billion investment expected to attract over 11,000 global companies.



Charles Murito, Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa at Google, during his opening keynote address

The hub, backed by the UAE's Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation (PCFC), will host major technology firms including Google, Apple, Microsoft, Oracle, Meta, IBM and Alphabet. He described the project as a launchpad for African innovation and a catalyst for trade and investment.

Gowu also referenced the One Million Coders Programme, which aims to train young Ghanaians in artificial intelligence and machine learning. Supported by partnerships with Huawei, MTN, Amazon Web Services and Oracle, the initiative is designed to build a generation of skilled digital professionals capable of solving local and global challenges.

Dr David Eduaful, Managing Director of Labadi Beach Hotel, welcomed delegates to the venue alongside Abeiku Aggrey Santana, the Deputy CEO of the Ghana Toursm Authority, who delivered a warm 'akwaaba' ('*welcome*') to all in attendance.

Charles Murito, Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, Government Affairs & Public Policy at Google, delivered the opening keynote address, sharing how AI is more than just technology: it's a general-purpose engine transforming economies and unlocking new solutions.

His address was followed by a speech by the special guest of honour, Mohammed Adams Sukparu, Ghana's Deputy Minister of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovation.

Professor Robert Ebo Hinson, Professor of Marketing at the University of Ghana Business School, made the closing remarks.

The TICON Africa Conference and African Marketing Confederation Conference took place simultaneously at the five-star Labadi Beach Hotel. The neighbouring five-star establishment, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, accommodated some of the delegates and hosted one of the evening events. Both hotels amply demonstrated the hospitality for which Ghana is rightly famous.

DAY ONE: Opening with purpose and momentum

The conference opened with a highly anticipated keynote address by Professor Nii Narku Quaynor, fondly known as the father of the internet in Africa – and winner of the TICON Africa Lifetime Achievement in ICT Award 2025.

Professor Quaynor's address, titled '*Africa's Internet Story: What We Got Right and What We Must Do Better*', drew on his decades of pioneering work in

building Africa's internet infrastructure and institutions – including his leadership at AFRINIC, the Internet Numbers Registry for Africa.

He reflected on three decades of connectivity in Ghana, celebrating milestones such as nearly 40% internet penetration in 30 years, but noted the presence of structural challenges. "Africa has 4.4 domain names per 1,000 people, compared to 45 globally," he said. Looking ahead, he argued that Africa can't rely on imitation; instead, we must "design a multistakeholder, bottom-up consensus model" to support innovation.

With the rise of artificial intelligence, he posed a pressing question: "What can we develop by ourselves, for ourselves?"

SMART INFRASTRUCTURE AND SMART CITIES BUILD GROWTH

Session One on '*Engineering Smart and Resilient Digital Ecosystems*' began with a keynote by Dr Mark-Oliver Kevor, Acting Director General of the National Information Technology Agency (NITA) in Ghana, titled '*Engineering for Urban Intelligence: Smart City Infrastructure for Sustainable Growth*'.

Kevor noted that cities drive over 80% of our global GDP but also consume more

Innovation meets impact at TICON Africa 2025 – advancing Africa's tech future and celebrating women in ICT

DAY ONE
Build homegrown capacity that works for Africa

Session Two on Day One shifted to the sub-theme '*Africa at the Forefront of the Global Tech Revolution*', with a keynote speech by Dr Stephane Nwolley (CEO Npontu Technologies, Ghana) titled '*Engineering with Intelligence: Smart Sensors, IoT, and Edge AI for Resilient Ecosystem Monitoring*'.

Nwolley urged Africa to build AI systems tailored to its own realities rather than importing generic models. Highlighting the shift from the Fourth to the Fifth Industrial Revolution – from "AI-powered automation" to "human-AI collaboration" – he showcased Snowlly, Npontu's AI platform designed with African cultural nuance, data sovereignty and affordability in mind.

Already applied to recruitment, sentiment analysis, credit scoring and WhatsApp-based customer support, Snowlly offers organisations 80% lower costs with full data privacy by running on local infrastructure. "Africa must not simply consume technology," he concluded, "but adapt and build AI that works for our people."

The second panel discussion on Day One tackled the topic '*Building the Backbone: Smart Infrastructure for a Digitally Resilient Africa*'. The session was moderated by Khombelwayo Mlotshwa (Managing Director, Zeecom Technologies, Lesotho), and the panellists were Freddy Ndhlovu (President, Computer Society of Zimbabwe and President and ICT Director at Procurement Regulatory Authority, Zimbabwe), Alhaji Sherrif Issah (Director of Information Security & Data Protection, IIPGH, Ghana), and Kamumaji Chitundu, Lead Business Consultant, Broad Image Solutions, Zambia).

The panellists stressed that the continent must lead the global tech revolution by focusing on access and affordability, digital skills and inclusive design. Policies should enable innovation while managing risks, and building homegrown capacity requires investment in people, infrastructure and finance, alongside a shift in mindset to trust African solutions.

Standards were highlighted as vital for interoperability and trust, while cybersecurity – from data breaches to supply chain attacks – must be built in from the start. Green IT and renewable energy were also seen as critical to resilience. Ultimately, collaboration can help Africa leapfrog into a secure, sustainable and innovation-driven digital future.

DAY ONE
IFIP scholarships for local talent

Joice Benza, Vice-President of the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), Zimbabwe, closed the first day's sessions by noting that Africa's digital transformation is uneven, with rural areas especially underserved. She highlighted the need for infrastructure, funding, skills and cybersecurity. Poverty, however, remains the biggest barrier.

In a significant gesture of support for capacity-building, she presented scholarships to three professionals from member associations – Institute of ICT Professionals Ghana (IIPGH), ICT Association of Uganda (ICTAU), and ICT Association of Malawi (ICTAM).

These scholarships will support master's degree studies in emerging technology domains, reinforcing IFIP's commitment to nurturing Africa's next generation of digital leaders.

than 70% of the world's energy and 75% of carbon emissions. The solution is cities that are not just smart but truly intelligent, with inclusive, human-centred design a priority, said Kevor, adding that cities belong to people.

His keynote address was followed by a panel discussion titled '*Building the Backbone: Smart Infrastructure for a Digitally Resilient Africa*'. It featured Elolo Alfred Konglo (Head, IT Infrastructure, Ho Technical University, Ghana), Moses Dossi (Manager, Mobile Money Products at Telekom Networks, Malawi), Peter Tumusiime (Country Manager at CWG, Uganda) and Samuel Muzata (CEO at Innovative Dynamics, Zambia).

The discussion was moderated by Rowena Turinawe, CEO of RukaPay, Uganda, and the first honorary member of the Women in TICON Africa Chapter.

Speakers emphasised that Africa's future depends on developing systems that are not only physical but also intelligent and adaptable. The conversation highlighted three core challenges: financing, regulation and inclusion. Spectrum costs and limited capital make expansion difficult, and rigid policies stifle innovation. Africa's greatest resource – her young people – are too often excluded due to cost and access barriers. Cybersecurity and trust also emerged as central issues, with 90% of cyberattacks caused by human factors.

The panellists urged governments and companies to strengthen awareness and align policies with international standards while remaining flexible. Connectivity must come first, however – it's the foundation of smart systems and cities.

DAY TWO: Insights, engagement and inclusion

Day Two introduced the sub-theme '*Tech-Driven Inclusion: Empowering Women for the Digital Economy*'.

Rowena Turinawe delivered the keynote address, titled '*The Flex Economy: Is Remote Work a Golden Opportunity or a Double-edged Sword for Women in Tech?*'. She highlighted how digital-first work models can empower women – provided that gaps in access, literacy and safety are closed.

The first panel discussion of the day, '*Pipeline to Power: Upskilling and Reskilling for High-Growth Tech Roles*', brought together four authoritative speakers offering practical strategies for strengthening

Panellists exploring how fintech and innovation are reshaping Africa's enterprises and empowering the next generation to compete on a global stage

women's participation in tech: Bianca Pasipanodya (Group ICT Executive at First Mutual Holdings, Zimbabwe), Viola Dondo (Executive Director of the Computer Society of Zimbabwe), Nana Adjoa Adobea Asante (co-founder and Senior Partner of Afrimore Advisors, Ghana) and Felizarda Mbewe (Head of Digital transformation at NICO Technologies, Malawi). The session was moderated by Malebogo Khanda-Wiktor (Botswana Information Technology Society).

The discussion underscored the importance of reskilling and upskilling in areas such as AI and digital transformation, highlighting how companies, governments and individuals can collaborate to unlock new opportunities. The topic ties directly into the Women in TICON Africa Chapter's vision to drive inclusion, leadership and innovation, ensuring women are not just participants but leaders in high-growth tech spaces.

Panellists discussing how to ensure that women lead in high-growth tech spaces

HIGHLIGHING FINTECH-LED GROWTH IN AFRICA

Day Two also placed a focus on fintech and innovation. Samual Muzata, CEO of Innovative Dynamics, Zambia, delivered the keynote address under the theme '*Bridging Regulation and Innovation: Creating an Enabling Environment for Fintech-Led Enterprise Growth*'.

Muzata highlighted Africa's strength as a global leader in mobile transactions, despite limited access to formal banking services. Drawing on Kenya's M-Pesa, Muzata emphasised the importance of designing for inclusion and highlighted progress in Rwanda, Ghana, Zambia and Malawi, where cross-border frameworks and interoperability are being established.

However, fragmented regulations and weak KYC (Know Your Customer) systems slow financial empowerment. Muzata called for smart regulation, cross-border collaboration and inclusive design to ensure fintech drives not just transactions, but transformation across the continent.

A fascinating panel discussion followed, under the title '*The Future is Decentralized: Empowering Africa's Next Generation through Fintech and Innovation for Competitive Enterprise Growth*'. The session was moderated by Eric Nana Kwabena Agyei (founder and CEO of MobiPay, AgroSystems, Uganda, as well as co-founder and CEO of GoldCrest Microfinance).

Panellists were John Bonuedi (CEO of Delbond, Ghana), Bonny Deladem Richie (IT Systems Support Manager, Eaton Towers, Ghana), Eltone Makaliki (Head of Innovation Transformation & Product Delivery, The National Pension Scheme Authority, Zambia) and Priscilla Maggie Paradza (Vice-Chairperson, Zimbabwe Women in ICT and ICT Manager at the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe).

The panellists stressed that mobile platforms allow small traders to save safely, grow into SMEs, and gain recognition from banks and policymakers. Innovation hubs and support desks across Africa are equipping women with training, loans and digital tools to start their own businesses, while examples from Zimbabwe, Ghana and Rwanda demonstrate progress in cross-border trade. The session concluded with a call for affordable, trusted and inclusive platforms that empower rural communities, women and youth, as well as for policies that enable rather than restrict innovation.

The following panel discussion, titled '*Unlocking Africa's Innovation Dividend*', saw innovation taking centre stage.

Panellists Kelvin Lotsu (Partner and Africa Representative, Gavazo, Ghana), Christopher Lalusha (Director of Information Communication Technology at The National Pension Scheme Authority, Zambia) and C. K. Bruce (CEO, Innovare Group, Ghana), shared pathways from local ingenuity to global markets through customer focus, data and disciplined execution. Encouragingly, Africa is not just consuming fintech – it's shaping the models defining the global digital economy.

Emmanuel Gbeve (Digitalization Project Manager, VisionFund Ghana) moderated the discussion.

EXPERTS DISCUSSED HOW DATA HAS BECOME THE MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE, RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT OWNERSHIP, CONSENT AND BENEFIT-SHARING, PARTICULARLY REGARDING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE.

DAY TWO
UiPath offers certification

On Day Two, Florin Grigorescu (UiPath of Academic Alliance, Romania) made an exciting announcement to conference delegates: in partnership with TICON Africa, UiPath reminded participants that conference attendance secured them globally recognised UiPath certification – free of charge (the certification exam usually costs $300).

This was just one of many benefits offered to TICON Africa members at the conference. On Day Three, Grigorescu held a UiPath Masterclass that equipped delegates with practical automation skills.

FROM STRATEGY TO IMPACT

Day Two's afternoon keynote address by Clarence Raymond Gama (CEO, NICO Technologies and President of the ICT Association of Malawi), was delivered under the theme '*Bridging the Gap: Translating Tech Strategy into Executive Impact – How Tech Professionals Can Communicate Value, Risk, and Innovation in the Boardroom*'.

Gama shared candid lessons from his career, highlighting the fact that IT professionals focus on systems and performance while executives are mindful of growth, risk, compliance and return on investment.

Bridging the gap requires translating jargon into relatable business language. He stressed the importance of storytelling, preparation and honesty in the boardroom. His key message was to speak the language of value, not just technology, to achieve buy-in.

Gama's keynote was followed by a lively panel discussion under the title '*The Inclusive Innovation Imperative: Designing FinTech for All*'. Moderated by Alain Gbeasor (Director of MOBEX Africa, Ghana), the panellists were Mapule Ncanywa (Chairperson, BRICS Skills Development, Applied Technology and Innovation Working Group, South Africa), Samuel Chiwanda (founder and CEO of Click Mobile, Ghana) and Desmond Israel (AGNOS Legal Company, Ghana).

The session explored how fintech must move beyond access to deliver real impact, with speakers emphasising human-centred design for underserved groups such as women, people with disabilities, and rural communities. Ncanywa highlighted efforts to align curricula, skills passports and competitions with the needs of the digital economy, while case studies – from Kenya's M-Pesa to Ghana's mobile money interoperability and blockchain pilots – showcased inclusive innovation in practice.

Israel stressed that financial inclusion must be "by design", underpinned by enabling policies, tax incentives and sandboxes that build trust and reduce friction for start-ups. Across the discussion, examples emanating from Malawi, Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa illustrated both the promise of fintech – alternative credit scoring, cross-border payments, mobile wallets – and the risks of exclusion when regulation, literacy and affordability are overlooked.

The session closed with a call for governments, industry and innovators to co-create ecosystems where trust, equity and opportunity are central to fintech's growth.

DAY TWO
Mobilisation of domestic revenue

Harrison S. Chapu (Director, Innovation and Project Management for the Zambian Revenue Authority) gave a keynote address under the title '*The Role of Technology in Domestic Revenue Mobilisation*'. He highlighted Africa's over-reliance on aid and the urgent need for domestic revenue mobilisation to fund infrastructure, social services and jobs.

Chapu argued that expanding the tax base, rather than raising rates, is critical, since high taxes drive informality and deter investment. The main challenges include a large informal economy, widespread tax evasion, poor taxpayer education and limited use of technology.

Celebrating the Women in TICON Chapter

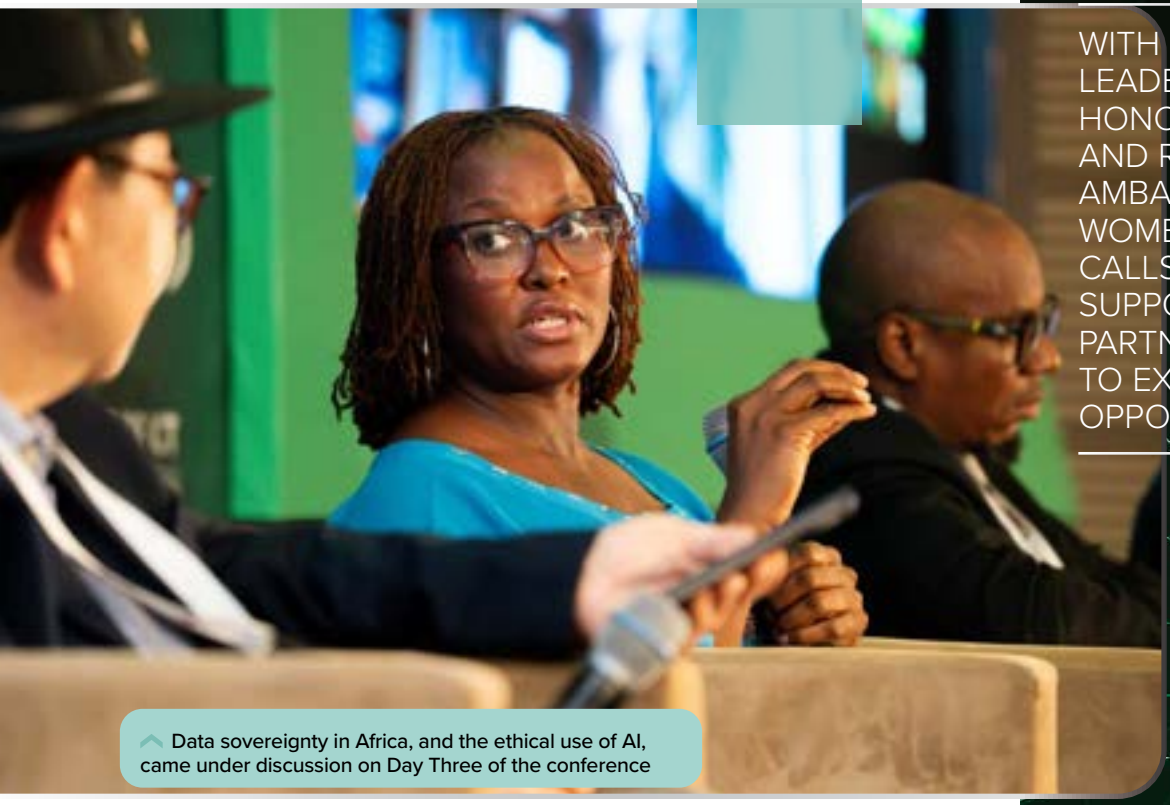
Florin Grigorescu's Masterclass gave delegates some practical tips on automation

BRIDGING THE TALENT GAP

Day Two's afternoon sessions fell under the sub-theme '*Bridging the Talent Gap – Industry-Education Synergies for Future-Proof Skills*'.

Isaac Gwumah (Executive Director, Bureau of Market & Social Research, Ghana) delivered a keynote address under the title '*Consumers' Adoption of Digital Payments as Brand Extensions – Research Evidence from Ghana*'. Gwumah demonstrated how digital payments serve as powerful brand extensions, with platforms like MTN MoMo and M-Pesa fostering trust and loyalty by transforming transactions into brand experiences.

Drawing on research in Ghana, he



Data sovereignty in Africa, and the ethical use of AI, came under discussion on Day Three of the conference

WITH STRONG LEADERSHIP, HONORARY MEMBERS, AND REGIONAL AMBASSADORS, WOMEN IN TICON CALLS FOR GREATER SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES.

highlighted that while price and usability matter less in mature markets, adoption now hinges on performance, trust transfer from parent brands, and brand extension fit – how well services align with consumer expectations.

Trust and brand strategy will drive digital payment growth as much as technology itself, he noted.

Gwumah's keynote was followed by a panel discussion under the title '*Bridging the Talent Gap to Align ICT Skills and Innovation to Power Africa's Industry Transformation*'.

The session was moderated by Jackie Namara Rukare (CEO, Iguru Consult, Uganda), and the panellists were Agnes Namulindwa Lumala (Academic Registrar, Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology), Exile Njoka (Group IT Manager, Continental Holdings, Malawi), Jessie Chandalala Sazambile (Head of ICT, Industrial Development Corporation, Zambia) and Richard Osei (CEO of African Aspirations, Ghana).

Panellists emphasised that Africa's competitiveness depends on connecting education to industry needs, fostering continuous upskilling, and creating

DAY THREE

IFIP sponsors ICT students

IFIP Vice-President Joice Benza (Zimbabwe) announced that the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) intends to sponsor deserving African students for Master's programmes in ICT, which will enable them to develop vital skills and contribute to the continent's ICT ecosystem.

Qualifying students will be awarded full tuition fees up to US$1,000 a year for the two-year Master's course. TICON Africa will be a key channel for delivering this initiative, Benza told conference delegates – and certificates will be handed over at a future TICON African Conference.

Professor Fred McBagonluri delivers the final keynote address

innovation-driven talent pipelines. To transform Africa's industries, ICT skills must evolve as fast as technology itself, conference delegates heard.

Day Two's final panel discussion, moderated by Jacqui Muller (Industry Coordinator, UiPath, South Africa), similarly highlighted the urgency of aligning education with industry to close Africa's digital skills gap.

The session, titled '*Closing the Skills Mismatch: Aligning Industry Demand with Educational Innovation in Africa*', featured panellists Elolo Alfred Konglo (Head, IT Infrastructure, Ho Technical University, Ghana), Tshepho Bathai (President, Botswana Information Technology Society) and Information and Digital Director at BA Isago University, Botswana), and Professor Japie Greeff (Research Coordinator, Belgium Campus, iTversity and Extraordinary Professor at North-West University, South Africa).

Speakers emphasised the importance of early exposure to ICT, flexible learning through micro-credentials, and stronger collaboration between universities and employers to ensure curricula align with workplace demand. With innovation in teaching, research and partnerships, Africa can build a resilient talent pipeline equipped for the digital future, conference delegates heard.

Discussing how Africa can build a resilient talent pipeline equipped for the digital future

DAY THREE: Data governance, awards, and continental direction

The final day of the conference opened with Professor Amevi Acakpovi (Acting Vice-Chancellor, Accra Technical University, Ghana) speaking on transforming academic research into scalable tech solutions.

Professor Acakpovi urged academia to bridge the gap with industry by aligning curricula to skills needs, embedding entrepreneurship and incubation centres, and fostering partnerships for research and innovation.

He stressed flexible learning, design hubs and tracer studies to produce adaptable, socially responsible graduates, arguing that while Africa has plenty of ideas, it lacks the pathways and environments to scale them.

This keynote address was followed by Dr Clement Sinyangwe's talk '*ICTAZ's Blueprint for Professional Excellence and Regulation*'.

As President of the ICT Association of Zambia (ICTAZ), Singyangwe stressed that professional bodies are key to Africa's tech future by regulating, setting ethical standards, advocating for members, and ensuring continuous training. He indicated how strong governance, sustainability and member value can position bodies like ICTAZ as champions of excellence.

Sinyangwe's talk was followed by a high-level UN Consultation on data governance, chaired by Professor Anthony Wong, President of the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP).

The panellists were Jimson Olufuye (Founder and First Chair, African ICT Alliance (AfICTA), Nigeria), Professor Muhammadou M.O. Kah (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Gambia to the Swiss

DAY THREE
Chairperson charts Chapter's early progress and direction

Elizabeth Chabaluka Masache (Chairperson, Women in TICON Africa) provided feedback on the Women in TICON Chapter, which was launched in August 2024.

Masache said Women in TICON has grown into a vibrant, cross-border community dedicated to empowering women in ICT across Africa. The Chapter focuses on professional growth, networking, advocacy and addressing the challenges faced by women through technology. Its notable achievements include the establishment of a continental network, implementing online masterclasses, and increased visibility for women in the tech sector. The Chapter enjoys strong leadership and has elected honorary members and appointed regional ambassadors.

Masache said Women in TICON is calling for greater support and more partnerships to expand opportunities, mentorship and inclusive development for women in the sector. *(Editor's note: See our Women in TICON article on page 38).*

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Connect. Grow. Lead.

Learn More

The conclusion of another successful TICON Africa conference

Confederation & Permanent Representative to the UN Offices at Geneva, Switzerland), Cédric Wachholz (UNESCO, Chief Digital Policies and Digital Transformation Section, Democratic Republic of Congo) and Teki Akuetteh (Chair, Data Protection Commission, Ghana).

This session highlighted the urgent need for data sovereignty and ethical AI, especially in the global South. Experts discussed how data has become the world's most valuable resource, raising complex questions about ownership, consent and benefit-sharing, particularly regarding indigenous knowledge. Panellists called for robust legal frameworks, local infrastructure, and community-led approaches to ensure fair use and protection of cultural heritage in the age of AI.

In the closing plenary, Winnie Dzidonu (Senior Manager, Digital Platforms, MTN, Ghana) showcased MTN Ghana's new digital platforms, followed by a rousing keynote from Professor Fred McBagonluri (President of Academic City University and Board Chair, IIPGH, Ghana), who challenged Africa to ignite growth through knowledge, trust and innovation.

David Gowu closed the conference by presenting membership certificates to new members and renewing a call for collective purpose, bringing an end to yet another successful TICON Africa Conference. ●

CATCHING UP WITH OLD FRIENDS AND MAKING NEW ACQUAINTANCES

Beyond the conference halls, TICON Africa 2025 hosted social events that blended fun with culture and networking.

TICON Africa Conference delegates got to experience the continent's spirit of hospitality at its finest.

On the first night of the conference, delegates wrapped up the day's discussions and presentations with an Akwaaba ('*Welcome*') Night at the historical Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park. Hosted by the Ghana Tourism Authority, the evening was a vibrant showcase of culture and heritage – a celebration of pan-African spirit and solidarity.

Guests were welcomed with speeches from David Gowu (President of TICON Africa), Helen McIntee-Carlisle (President of the African Marketing Confederation), Maame Efua Houadjeto (CEO of the Ghana Tourism Authority) and Abeiku Aggrey Santana (Deputy CEO of the Ghana Tourism Authority). This was followed by music and cocktails under the stars, setting the perfect tone for the days ahead.

On the second evening, delegates gathered for a lively beach party on the manicured lawns of La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, where lush gardens meet the Atlantic coastline. The waterfront space transformed into a tropical networking paradise, complete with ocean breezes and the gentle sound of waves. After enjoying a hearty Ghanaian dinner featuring local specialities, delegates hit the dance floor. The relaxed coastal atmosphere helped transform professional connections into lasting personal bonds ●

PHOTO: TICON AFRICA

I am not

TICON AFRICA HONOURS TOP ACHIEVERS IN TECHNOLOGY AT GLITTERING GALA DINNER

Judges were overwhelmed by the magnitude and quality of the nominations as the 2025 award winners were announced in Accra.

As tourism and hospitality partner of the TICON Africa Conference, the Ghana Tourism Authority was recognised for extending its signature 'Akwaaba' welcome to delegates. Abeiku Aggrey Santana, Acting Deputy CEO, accepted the accolade on behalf of the Authority

Click Mobile, Malawi, was named ICT Company of the Year

The final night of the TICON Africa Conference 2025 was the culmination of three days of inspiration, innovation and pan-African excellence. At a sparkling banquet dinner, the winners of the TICON Africa Awards were announced to a jubilant audience.

An impressive 82 entries were received, and the judges found it challenging to decide on the final winners, said David Gowu, President of TICON Africa, who noted that this was a testament to the vibrancy of the ICT sector in Africa.

Each category had several stringent requirements for nominations to be considered, one of which was how ICT innovation is used to benefit communities. "This was deliberately so, in keeping with this year's conference theme of '*Empowering Africa's Tech Future: Innovation*, Standards, and Global Influence'," said Gowu.

Samuel Chiwanda, founder and CEO of Click Mobile, was named IT Professional of the Year

HOMEGROWN AFRICAN TALENT IN ABUNDANCE

Gowu went on to add that the awards "highlight Africa's collective talent pool and reinforce the message that the continent is not merely a consumer of technology, but a creator and innovator in its own right".

The nominations, and the quality of the winners' work, show there is no shortage of outstanding ICT professionals and companies on the continent. "It is our hope that each one of these people or their companies become a role model for the next generation as we move full steam ahead into an exciting era of artificial intelligence and data analysis technology," stated Gowu.

Christine Chungu, Head of Technical Services at Starlabs, was named Young ICT Trailblazer of the Year

2026 AWARD NOMINATIONS

Nominations for the 2026 TICON Africa Awards will open on 15 January 2026 and close on 26 June 2026.

2025 TICON AFRICA WINNERS

The 2025 TICON Africa winners in the respective categories were:

Young ICT Trailblazer (Under 35)
Winner: Christine Chungu, Zambia
Runner-up: Moses Lesetja Monyamane, South Africa

ICT Professional of the Year
Winner: Samuel Chiwanda, Malawi
Runner-up: Daniel Chibesakunda, Zambia

Women in Tech Excellence Award
Winner: Matambila Karima-Chuunga, Zambia
Runner-up: Joice Benza, Zimbabwe

Public Sector ICT Innovation Award
Winner: SMART Zambia Institute, Zambia
Runner-up: National Information Technology Agency (NITA), Ghana

AI & Emerging Tech Innovation Award
Winner: AIDEC Digital, Ghana
Runner-up: Issac Kofi Maafo, Ghana

AIDEC Digital, Ghana, received the AI & Emerging Tech Innovation Award. The recognition honours the pioneering work of the company's AI Centre of Excellence Lab and the AIDEC BPO Centre, which provides customer support, data analytics, telemarketing, and social media management for businesses across Africa and beyond

Startup of the Year
Winner: LIBBLIO (Library Management System), Rwanda
Runner-up: Easylinks, Malawi

Social Impact through ICT Award
Winner: Savana Signatures, Ghana
Runner-up: Musekiwa Moyo, Zambia

Excellence in Cybersecurity Awards
Winner: Paula Nkandu-Haamaundu, Zambia
Runner-up: Musonda Mwambazi Kapaya – Digital Safe, Zambia

ICT Company of the Year
Winner: Click Mobile, Malawi
Runner-up: Axis Solutions Africa, Zimbabwe

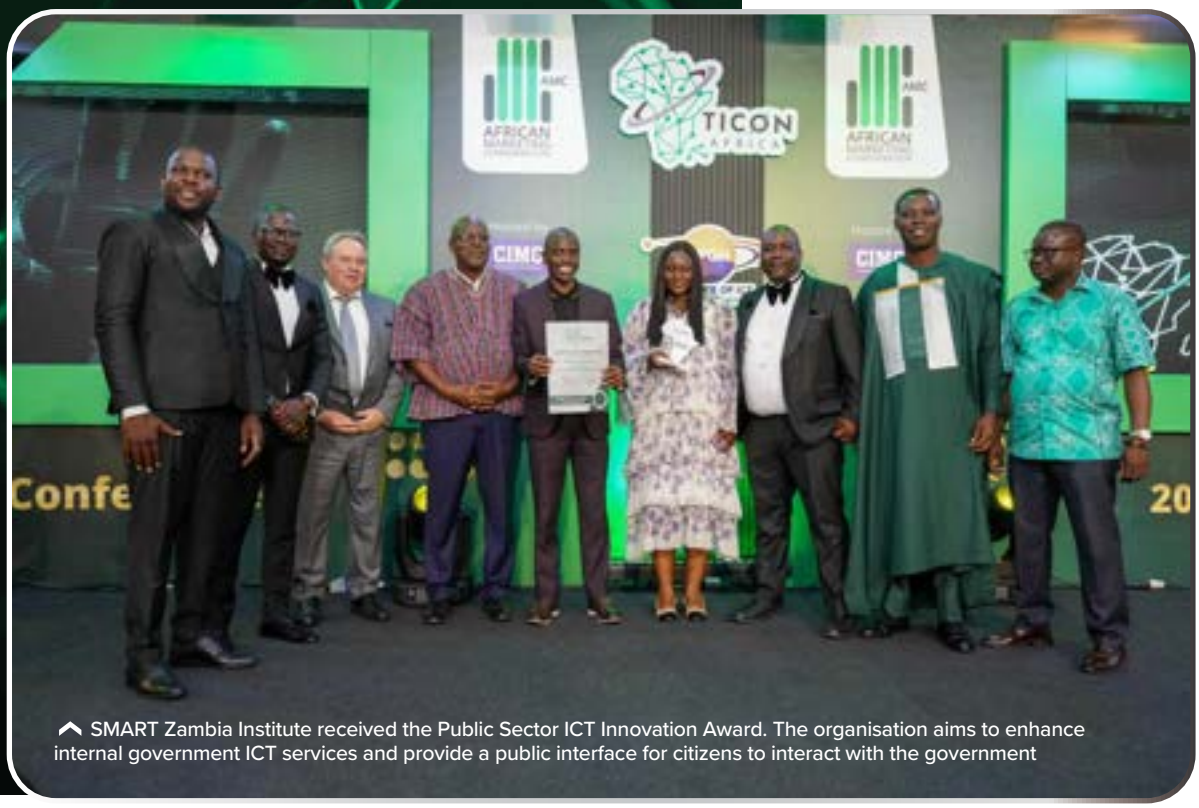
Professional Body of the Year
ICT Association of Zambia (ICTAZ), Zambia

Lifetime Achievement in ICT
Winner: Professor Nii Narku Quaynor, Ghana

LIBBLIO (Library Management System) in Rwanda was recognised as Startup of the Year, with Easylinks from Malawi the runner-up

Matambila Karima-Chuunga from Zambia scooped the Women in Tech Excellence Award, with Joice Benza from Zimbabwe the runner-up

AN IMPRESSIVE 82 ENTRIES WERE RECEIVED AND THE JUDGES FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO CHOOSE THE EVENTUAL AWARD WINNERS



SMART Zambia Institute received the Public Sector ICT Innovation Award. The organisation aims to enhance internal government ICT services and provide a public interface for citizens to interact with the government

GHANA'S 'FATHER OF THE INTERNET' HONOURED AT TICON AFRICA AWARDS

Professor Nii Narku Quaynor, the Ghanaian scientist and engineer, was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement in ICT Award at this year's TICON Africa Awards.

Professor Quaynor receiving his Lifetime Achievement in ICT Award at the TICON Africa Conference gala dinner

The award was in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to bridging the digital divide on the African continent.

For more than three decades, Professor Quaynor has been at the forefront of Africa's connectivity journey, pioneering networks, shaping policy, and mentoring generations of ICT leaders. The award not only celebrated his personal achievements but also underscored the enduring impact of local innovation and leadership in Africa's digital transformation.

CELEBRATING CONTINENT'S 30-YEAR INTERNET JOURNEY

Professor Quaynor delivered a keynote address on Day One of the conference under the title '*Africa's Internet Story: What We Got Right, and What We Must Do Better*'.

In his keynote, Professor Quaynor reflected candidly on Ghana's 30-year journey of full internet connectivity, beginning with the early NCS Network Systems experiment in 1993.

What started with small leased circuits soon expanded into IP-based connections, satellite access, and later fibre and 4G. He credited this progress to a mix of local expertise, enabling policy reforms under the late Ghanaian president, Jerry Rawlings, and a spirit of collaboration that prioritised open participation and capacity building.

THINK DIFFERENTLY TO BRIDGE DIGITAL DIVIDE

While celebrating progress – including nearly 40% internet penetration in Africa over the past 30 years, the establishment of Africa's generic domain (.africa), and the growth of indigenous ISPs – he emphasised that challenges remain. Many early service providers failed, content hosting lags at around 50%, and Africa's innovation and standards development have struggled to keep pace globally.

"We didn't build a true internet industry," he noted, pointing to weaknesses in infrastructure, skills and long-term policy.

Professor Quaynor argued that Africa cannot simply "catch up" as a latecomer but must think differently: focusing on long-term planning, sustainable governance, and multistakeholder consensus. He urged policymakers to foster local innovation, domesticate resources, address capital flight, and strengthen technical capacity.

Turning to the future, he drew parallels between the early internet and today's emerging AI technologies, warning that without foresight, AI could deepen the digital divide in the Global South.

He challenged Africa to intentionally develop solutions tailored to its own context, leverage open-source resources, and actively participate in shaping the global governance of digital technologies.

PHOTOS: TICON AFRICA

Q & A with Professor Quaynor

Q: What does receiving this lifetime achievement award from TICON Africa signify to you personally, and to the broader African tech community?
A: It pleases me to learn that recognition for my contributions goes beyond my immediate internet technical community to the broader technology, business and marketing industry in Africa. This humbles me.

Q: Looking back on your decades of work, what moments stand out as turning points for Africa's internet development?
A: A few things come to mind:

- One was earning one of the first PhDs in computer science by an African scholar – my 1977 thesis focused on distributed systems, which later became a foundational concept for how computers communicate over networks.
- Another key moment was in 1979, when I helped establish the Department of Computer Science at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana.
- Then, in 1995, Ghana achieved its first full Internet connection – a pivotal moment that connected the country to the global digital community.
- Finally, I would say being a catalyst in building Africa's internet coordination and governance communities has been equally significant. This includes the African Network Operators Group (AfNOG), the African Network Information Centre (AfriNIC), the African Top Level Domains Organisation (AfTLD), DotAfrica, AfricaCERT, and AfRegistrar, among others.

Q: You've been called "the father of the Internet in Africa." How do you feel about that title and what do you think it captures – or perhaps misses – about your journey?
A: I don't know why I'm called "the father of internet", but I accept the title as recognition from comrades who participated in pioneering the internet in Africa. They all deserve to be "fathers of the internet"! The title perhaps captures the technical leadership played in introducing internet technology in Africa – certainly, I was the most senior and experienced technical leader in the region in the '90s.

NII NARKU QUAYNOR

1949 – Nii Narku Quaynor born.
1972 – Graduated in engineering science from Dartmouth College, US.
1973 – Received Bachelor of Engineering degree from the Thayer School of Engineering, Dartmouth.
1974 – Obtained M.S. from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.
1977 – Obtained Ph.D. from the same institution.
1979 – Started teaching at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana, where he helped to set up the Computer Science Department
2000 – Appointed Director of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) (he was the first African to be elected to the board)
2007 – Awarded the Jonathan B. Postel Service Award by the Internet Society for his pioneering work in advancing the internet in Africa.
2013 – Inducted into the Internet Hall of Fame by the Internet Society.
2015 – Awarded the 2015 ICANN Multi-stakeholder Ethos Award, with Cheryl Langdon Orr.

Prof. Quaynor (left) with Prof. Fred McBagonluri and David Gowu (right)

MEET SAMUEL CHIWANDA – TICON AFRICA'S I.C.T. PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

The founder and CEO of Click Mobile scooped the coveted – and highly contested – ICT Professional of the Year Award at the TICON Africa Conference.

A proud moment for Malawi – Click Mobile CEO Samuel Chiwanda (holding trophy) is honoured as TICON Africa's ICT Professional of the Year

Malawian entrepreneur Samuel Chiwanda had no idea he would be named ICT Professional of the Year at this year's TICON Africa Conference. In fact, he didn't even know he was a nominee!

"My team submitted entries for two categories, but I wasn't sure which they were," he recalls.

"I was taken by surprise when I won – and to be honest, I was honoured and humbled when my name was called. There were so many seasoned ICT professionals from across the continent at the event. I wasn't sure I had a chance."

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Chiwanda, who holds a Bachelor of Business Information Technology and a Bachelor of Science in Networks and Communications Systems, became an entrepreneur as he didn't relish the idea of going into an office every day and "wearing a suit and tie and being told what to do every day until I retired".

> THERE WERE SO MANY SEASONED I.C.T. PEOPLE AT THE EVENT … I WASN'T SURE I HAD A CHANCE

He decided to start his own business, but raising capital proved difficult. "Nobody talked about seed funding or raising investment capital in those days," he says. "Today, it's much easier for entrepreneurs to raise money or issue shares."

He set out to fund his business by selling clothes and weaves, which he purchased in Kenya and sold in Malawi. "That didn't work so well because the returns weren't that great," he confesses. He then took on debt in the form of high-interest loans, some of which charged 50% interest a week.

Despite early challenges, Chiwanda persevered and founded Click Mobile, a thriving technology company that delivers A2P transmission, short code aggregation, airtime sales, bulk SMS termination, and software development solutions. Click Mobile now has more than 13 branches in Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

Accolades have followed – Chiwanda earned a top-seven ranking in the 2022 Rocco Awards, and he received the CXO of the Year award at the Africa Tech Awards.

PHOTOS: MICROSOFT COPILOT; CLICK MOBILE; TICON AFRICA

Click Mobile employees at the Click Mobile Awards held in Cape Town

Samuel's words of wisdom:

- Believe in yourself and your abilities.
- Money is not everything; humanity is everything.
- Put people first.
- You lose nothing by apologising.
- Don't ever fight for money.
- Learn lessons from experiences.
- Learn to cut off or distance yourself from people who disturb your peace.

In addition, Click Mobile received the 'Best Africa Provider' Excellence Award at the Antonio Meucci Global Telco Awards in 2023, and an Honours Award in 2025.

IMPORTANCE OF GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

After 15 years in the telecommunications industry, Chiwanda is flying high. However, although he says he has no regrets, his journey was undeniably "tough and painful" at times. His hands-on approach saw him troubleshooting technical issues late into the night, but his relentless customer focus helped to build trust in his brand.

Having faced numerous challenges, he aims to make life easier for youngsters who follow in his footsteps. "The greatest success in life is to make someone else's life easier," Chiwanda says. "Having everything to yourself isn't success."

As a result, he has rolled out scholarships to 15 students from across Africa and is setting up a Click Village in Malawi, where he plans to hire young people for its construction.

"This will be an incubation centre to which they can bring their bright ideas," he says. The centre will also feature one of Chiwanda's passions – a soccer field. "The aim is to keep them busy, which will keep them away from harmful influences," he tells *Tech Pulse Africa*.

He adds that young people look up to him – "and want to be like me" – which has given him a sense of responsibility. "It will be great if I can help the next entrepreneur have an easier time than I did," he says.

FINTECH A PART OF HIS VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Chiwanda is not resting on his laurels. Click Mobile is venturing into international airtime top-ups as a stepping stone towards offering international money transfers – a natural next move into fintech. Sending money across borders, as a remittance service, is highly regulated – but the plan is to obtain the necessary licences and take the plunge.

From his early struggles to his plans to break into fintech, Chiwanda's story embodies what the ICT Professional of the Year Award celebrates: vision, perseverance and impact. As he prepares for his next chapter, he's also mindful that he's building a legacy. ●

Click Mobile's ambition is to offer international money transfers

Zambia's marketing, ICT and supply chain professionals rush onto the stage in Acca to celebrate the announcement that they are the 2026 conference hosts

2026 TICON AFRICA CONFERENCE HEADS TO LIVINGSTONE IN ZAMBIA

Zambia is confirmed as the host nation for the 2026 ICT, marketing and supply chain gatherings as 2025 host country, Ghana, passes the baton.

The ICT Association of Zambia (ICTAZ) is to host the 2026 TICON Africa Conference. The announcement was made at the conclusion of the 2025 Conference in Accra.

In keeping with previous years, the Technology Information Confederation Africa (TICON Africa) annual conference will run concurrently with the marketing conference. And, for the first time, 2026 will see a newly formed African Supply Chain Confederation (Afcon) also joining the gathering. This is in recognition of the growing synergies between marketing, supply chain and ICT.

The host for the African Marketing Confederation conference is the Zambia Institute of Mafketing (ZIM), while the Zambia Institute of Purchasing and Supply (ZIPS) will host the supply chain professionals.

The Zambian contingent meets with the country's Minister of Tourism, Hon. Rodney Sikumba, in Lusaka

AMC and TICON Africa member countries who unsuccessfully bid for the 2026 conference were Malawi and Botswana.

ZAMBIAN DELEGATES JUBILANT

The announcement of Zambia's winning bid was greeted by tumultuous applause and shouts of jubilation from the Zambian contingent, as they made their way to the stage to hold aloft the trophy awarded at each conference to the country that will take on the challenge of hosting the following year's gathering.

"This landmark event will bring together marketing leaders, professionals and stakeholders across the continent to exchange ideas, build networks, and shape the future of marketing in Africa," said the President of the Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM), Mwewa Besa, in a subsequent statement posted on social media.

Upon their return home to Zambia, the three associations paid a visit to the Minister of Tourism, Hon. Rodney Sikumba, during which the trophy was ceremonially handed over.

The ICTAZ team at the handover was led by Mr Chella Silavwe, Registrar & CEO of the Information and Communications Technology Association of Zambia (representing the ICTAZ President).

The ZIM team was led by Mr Mwewa Besa, President of ZIM, Mr Danny Chanda, Registrar and CEO of ZIM, and Mr Matongo Matamwandi, CEO of the Zambia Tourism Agency (ZTA). They were joined by Mr Daniel Kabamba, President of the Zambia Institute of Purchasing and Supply.

MINISTER REITERATES SUPPORT

In his remarks, the Minister reiterated the government's full support for the joint conference, emphasising its importance to the nation.

"Tourism is central to our growth agenda, and MICE tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments. This win affirms Zambia's readiness to host world-class events and strengthens our reputation as a centre for innovation, culture and commerce," the Minister is quoted as

TOURISM IS CENTRAL TO ZAMBIA'S GROWTH. THIS WIN AFFIRMS ITS READINESS TO HOST WORLD-CLASS EVENTS AND GROWS ITS REPUTATION AS A DESTINATION FOR VISITORS

Proudly displaying the passing of the baton! The Zambian contingent with the trophy signifying they will be the next hosts. Holding the trophy is Matongo Matamwandi of the Zambia Tourism Agency

Hon. Rodney Sikumba and the Zambian contingent proudly show off the trophy signalling that they will be the next conference hosts

saying by the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr Besa emphasised the power of collaboration in securing the bid. "This victory belongs to the nation. It reflects the strength of our partnerships and will open doors for business, regional cooperation, and the promotion of Zambia's professional expertise," he said.

Zambia Tourism Agency CEO, Matongo Matamwandi, echoed the sentiment, noting that MICE tourism plays a critical role in boosting visibility and attracting investment. "We will continue working with stakeholders to expand capacity and market Zambia globally as a premier MICE destination," he stated.

According to the ZNBC, the Ministry of Tourism extended its gratitude to ZIM, the Information and Communication Technology Association of Zambia, the Zambia Institute of Purchasing and Supply, and the Zambia Tourism Agency for their leadership and teamwork in securing the historic opportunity.

The 2026 conference will take place at Livingstone, Victoria Falls, in September. ●

THIS VICTORY BELONGS TO THE NATION. IT REFLECTS THE STRENGTH OF OUR PARTNERSHIPS AND WILL OPEN DOORS FOR BUSINESS, REGIONAL COOPERATION, AND THE PROMOTION OF ZAMBIA'S PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

Representatives of the hosting associations outside the Ministry of Tourism offices in Lusaka

PHOTOS: ZIM, TICON AFRICA

PLANS UNVEILED FOR 2026 AWARDS TO CELEBRATE EXCELLENCE IN AFRICA'S I.C.T. SECTOR

❮ Nominations for the prestigious 2026 TICON Africa Awards will open on 15 January 2026 and close on 26 June 2026

Following the resounding success of the 2025 Awards, preparations are underway for the 2026 edition of this prestigious continental celebration of tech leadership and innovation.

Building on lessons learned and feedback from participating countries, the awards programme has been refined to 10 streamlined categories that best reflect the spirit of excellence, professionalism and impact within Africa's technology and digital ecosystem.

Nominations for the 2026 TICON Africa Awards open on 15 January 2026 and close on 26 June 2026, providing ample time for member associations, organisations and individuals to submit their entries. To safeguard integrity, the entire process will be audited by an independent audit firm.

The 10 categories are:

1. ICT Company of the Year
This award honours an organisation demonstrating continent-leading performance in innovation, growth, customer impact and good governance, with measurable contributions to Africa's digital economy.

2. Public Sector ICT Innovation
This award recognises a government department, agency, state-owned enterprise or municipality that has delivered citizen-centric digital services or operational efficiencies, with proven outcomes at scale.

3. ICT Professional of the Year
This celebrates an individual whose technical excellence, leadership and ethics have advanced the profession and delivered significant impact for their organisation and the ecosystem.

4. Women in Tech Excellence Award
This award highlights a woman (or women-led initiative) that breaks barriers and drives inclusive growth through technology, mentorship and sustained industry influence.

5. Young ICT Trailblazer (under 35)
This award applauds a rising leader under 35 who has shown exceptional innovation, execution and potential to shape Africa's technology future.

6. Social Impact through ICT
This rewards initiatives using technology to improve livelihoods and inclusion – such as e-health, e-learning, agri-tech, accessibility, climate resilience or civic empowerment – with clear evidence of community benefit.

7. Excellence in Cybersecurity
This award recognises outstanding achievement in protecting systems and data, strengthening resilience, advancing compliance or raising security awareness across sectors.

8. Startup & Emerging Tech Innovation Award
This award showcases early-stage ventures or emerging-tech projects (AI, Internet of Things, fintech, edge, robotics, etc.) with strong product-market fit, traction and scalability across African markets.

9. Professional Body of the Year Award
This honours a national ICT association or professional body that has advanced standards, skills, ethics and collaboration in alignment with TICON Africa's continental objectives.

10. Lifetime Achievement in ICT
This award pays tribute to an individual whose multi-decade contribution has shaped Africa's ICT landscape through visionary leadership, institution building and enduring impact.

Recognised as one of the continent's most distinguished ICT award platforms, the TICON Africa Awards continue to grow in stature, showcasing outstanding achievements, innovative projects and transformative leadership that drive Africa's digital future.

The 2026 awards will be presented during a grand ceremony in Livingstone, Zambia, in September 2026 as part of the TICON Africa Annual Conference. Delegates will gather to honour the trailblazers shaping the continent's technological transformation and celebrate shared progress towards a connected, empowered and competitive digital Africa. ●

PHOTO: MICROSOFT COPILOT

TICON women at the 2025 conference in Accra

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INCLUSION ACROSS THE CONTINENT

Elizabeth Masache, Chairperson of the Women in TICON Africa Chapter, discusses a proud movement that is helping to redefine Africa's digital story.

Elizabeth Masache addresses delegates at the 2025 conference

In August 2024, a new chapter in Africa's digital transformation story was written. At the scenic Sarova Whitesands in Mombasa, Kenya, the Women in TICON Africa Chapter was officially launched, marking a powerful step toward inclusive growth, visibility and leadership for women in the technology, innovation, communication and networking ecosystem.

Since then, this initiative has grown into a vibrant continental movement – a collective of professionals, leaders, entrepreneurs and changemakers united by a shared purpose: to empower women, connect across borders, and design technology-driven solutions that address real-life challenges facing women in Africa.

OUR VISION

In a nutshell: '*A flourishing African woman*.'

OUR MISSION

- To empower women in ICT.
- To connect women across borders.
- To design and implement programmes that use technology to transform lives.

OUR CHAPTER'S MILESTONES AND NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Building a continental network

From its inception, Women in TICON Africa has focused on uniting women across the continent.

Through continental mapping and networking, the Chapter has created a connected platform where women in ICT collaborate, share experiences and uplift one another. This network now serves as the backbone of women's collaboration across TICON Africa member countries.

In a nutshell: '*Our greatest strength lies in collaboration across borders. We are building a sisterhood that transcends geography*'.

2. Capacity building through regular online Masterclasses

Empowerment through knowledge remains at the heart of the Chapter.

Since launch, Women in TICON Africa has hosted Masterclasses and expert sessions featuring renowned professionals in technology, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

- The first Masterclass, led by Dr Elaine Van Wyk (South Africa), drew over 120 women participants from across Africa.
- The second Masterclass featured powerhouse women Dr Ethel Cofie (Ghana) and Cynthia Ofori Dwumfuo (Ghana), whose combined expertise in tech and marketing left a lasting impression on participants.

These sessions continue to equip women with practical skills, mentorship and networks – tools essential for thriving in the digital economy.

3. Advocacy and visibility

Visibility matters. Women in TICON Africa has championed the voice of women in technology across influential platforms.

At the Women in ICT Zimbabwe Annual Event, Jacqui Muller represented the Chapter, advocating for women breaking barriers in the ICT space.

This advocacy extends beyond speeches; it's reshaping how TICON Africa itself is perceived.

Before the Women's Chapter was formed, many had little awareness of TICON's vast potential. Today, the Chapter has become a key driver of TICON's visibility and relevance, taking its message further, louder and more effectively.'

'*We are not only amplifying the voices of women – we are amplifying the TICON brand itself.*'

4. Collaboration across borders

From Uganda to Ghana, South Africa to Malawi, collaboration is the Chapter's heartbeat.

Women in TICON Africa has cultivated cross-country partnerships in mentorship, research and innovation, creating a continent-wide support system for women in tech.

This peer-to-peer model is nurturing solidarity, leadership and shared learning that transcends national boundaries.

5. Honouring trailblazers

To celebrate excellence, the Chapter introduced an Honorary Membership Program, welcoming distinguished women who have made remarkable contributions to ICT across Africa.

Our Honorary Members include:

- Rowena Turinawe (Uganda) – ICT Young Professional of the Year (TICON Awards 2023).
- Ethel Cofie (Ghana) – CEO, EDEL Technology Consulting, and one of Africa's most influential women in tech.
- Maaki Jantees (South Africa) – Group Executive, Telkom Group, and thought leader in ICT.

These icons are mentors, role models and champions of the Women in TICON Africa vision.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES SHAPING THE FUTURE

As the Chapter looks ahead to 2025-2026, its strategic direction is anchored in growth, impact and sustainability. Among our strategic initiatives for 2026 are:

Elizabeth (far left) with other leading women of TICON (from left): Felizarda Mbewe (Malawi); Gifty Mottey-Gowu (Ghana); Elizabeth Ntege (Uganda); and Bianca Pasipanodya (Zimbabwe)

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1. Regional Ambassadors Programme
Every country will have a designated ambassador to mobilise women, strengthen visibility and ensure representation at the continental level.

2. Establishing National Chapters
National Women in TICON Chapters will be set up across member countries to foster local ownership while staying connected to the continental vision.

3. Recognition of Honorary Members
The Chapter will continue to recognise exceptional women leaders as honorary members, amplifying mentorship and advocacy across Africa.

4. Women in TICON professional database
An upgraded database will go beyond names – offering mentorship pairings, funding opportunities and professional linkages to make empowerment practical and measurable.

5. Continental Masterclass Series (2025-2026)
Structured learning paths will focus on leadership, emerging technologies, entrepreneurship and personal growth – nurturing a new generation of female tech leaders.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Feature Focus: Mapping women's representation and leadership in ICT across Africa

'Data is power – and for African women in ICT, this study will give us the evidence we need to drive transformation.'

In line with its mission to empower women and shape inclusive digital growth, Women in TICON Africa is spearheading a landmark continental research initiative titled: *Mapping Women's Representation and Leadership in ICT Across Africa: A Continental Baseline Study'.*

This groundbreaking study represents the first continent-wide assessment of the status, challenges and opportunities facing women in ICT. It seeks to capture the true picture of women's participation, leadership and visibility within Africa's evolving digital ecosystem.

WHY THIS STUDY MATTERS

The research aims to:

- Provide evidence-based insights on the representation of women in ICT across Africa.
- Identify barriers and enablers that affect women's entry, growth and leadership in technology.
- Inform policy, advocacy and programme design for impactful national and continental initiatives.
- Support inclusive digital transformation, ensuring that women are recognised as innovators, leaders and change agents.

This study directly supports TICON Africa's broader goal of accelerating digital transformation through inclusivity and evidence-based leadership.

A CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Women in TICON Africa invites national associations, research institutions, policymakers and industry partners to participate in and support this landmark study. Through this collaborative effort, the Chapter seeks to establish a continental baseline that will guide programmes and policies for years to come.

'This study is not just about data – it's about rewriting the story of women in Africa's digital transformation.'

OUR CALL TO ACTION

To continue building momentum, Women in TICON Africa extends an open call to partners, associations and allies across the continent to:

1. Collaborate with National Associations
Support the creation of national women's chapters to accelerate inclusion.

2. Participate in the Baseline Study & Pilot Intervention Project
Help map opportunities and challenges for women in technology.

3. Partner with Us
Institutions and industry leaders are invited to co-create initiatives that nurture women's leadership in ICT.

4. Mentorship
Recommend women leaders to serve as mentors and inspire the next generation.

'Think of the last time a woman inspired you – your mother, a mentor, a colleague. That's the kind of inspiration we want to multiply through Women in TICON Africa.'

THE ROAD AHEAD

Women in TICON Africa is more than a chapter – it is a movement of empowerment, a network of brilliance, and a vision of a flourishing African woman leading the digital future.

Through collaboration, mentorship and shared purpose, this initiative continues to redefine what inclusion looks like in Africa's technology landscape.

'When women rise, nations rise. When women in technology lead, Africa transforms.'

Elizabeth Masache is Chairperson of the Women in in TICON Africa Chapter and IT Service Delivery Manager at NICO Technologies in Malawi. She is also Treasurer General of the ICT Association of Malawi (ICTAM). She holds a Master's in Business Administration from the Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI) and a Bachelor's degree in Computing and Information Systems from London Metropolitan University (UK).

Women in TICON Africa is building a sisterhood that transcends geography

PHOTO: IMAGE BY DC STUDIO ON FREEPIK

Women in ICT unite at the BITS launch event in Gaborone, marking a milestone for collaboration, mentorship, and digital transformation in Botswana

BOTSWANA'S WOMEN IN I.C.T. SET NEW COURSE FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

New chapter aims to create a platform where women in tech can align their skills, share opportunities and collectively influence Botswana's digital transformation.

A new chapter for women in technology is taking shape in Botswana, promising to drive digital transformation through professional development, mentorship and collaboration.

On 4 September 2025, the Botswana Information Technology Society (BITS) officially introduced its Women in ICT Chapter at a vibrant soft launch hosted by Cavista Technologies in Gaborone. The theme was '*Her Circle: Talk. Share. Grow*'.

The launch marked a milestone in uniting women across the ICT ecosystem in Botswana – from academia and civil society to private companies, entrepreneurs and independent consultants.

More than 30 professionals and tech enthusiasts gathered for a two-hour networking and empowerment session designed to foster collaboration and growth. Established as one of BITS's special interest groups, the Chapter aims to create a platform where women in

Malebogo Khanda-Wiktor is Chairperson of the new BITS Women in ICT Chapter

PHOTOS: BITS; ELIZABETH MASACHE; MICROSOFT COPILOT + TICON AFRICA

THE LAUNCH MARKED A MILESTONE IN UNITING WOMEN ACROSS THE I.C.T. ECOSYSTEM IN BOTSWANA

technology can align their skills, share opportunities and collectively influence Botswana's digital transformation.

PURPOSE AND INSPIRATION

Opening the event, BITS president Tshepho Bathai urged women to be "free and deliberate in their intentions" as they pursue advancement in ICT. He reaffirmed BITS's mandate to regulate the ICT profession and drive the digital economy into a viable sector – one where women play a pivotal role.

The Chapter is also part of Women in TICON Africa, a regional network committed to empowering women across the continent. Its Chairperson, Elizabeth Masache, encouraged Botswana's Chapter to engage actively in TICON Africa initiatives, including the TICON Africa Conference 2026 in Zambia.

Malebogo Khanda-Wiktor, Chairperson of the new BITS Women in ICT Chapter, said the launch provided women with the opportunity to discuss issues in Botswana and propose solutions aligned with Women in TICON Africa's vision. Women needed to uplift one another and work towards a common goal of advancing women in the ICT sector.

She also highlighted the Chapter's vision of building a strong community of women in tech and entrepreneurs who can grow together, mentor emerging talent and position Botswana prominently within Africa's ICT landscape.

BREAKING BARRIERS – BUT FACING NEW CHALLENGES

A discussion around the topic '*Generational Expectations for Women in ICT*' revealed that participation in the sector is rising, thanks to the perseverance of pioneering women who broke barriers when roles were limited to desktop administration or secretarial work. Jobs like working in server rooms were once taboo in the 1990s and early 2000s; today, younger women find entry easier, though challenges remain, such as keeping pace with evolving software and security demands.

Participants agreed that while progress has been made, persistent obstacles require collective action. Women were encouraged to formally join the Chapter and contribute to initiatives that support professional growth.

A CALL TO ACTION

It was agreed that, while barriers have been broken, challenges persist. Women at the event were encouraged to formally join the new Chapter and participate in initiatives to help one another grow in the profession.

In her closing remarks, Lilly Sullivan, former Chief Information Officer at telecommunications company Mascom, challenged women to stay engaged, thereby making the Chapter an active, living network; to mentor and support others; to collaborate; and to "think beyond Botswana" so that the country takes its rightful place in Africa's digital transformation.

Sullivan said, "When women unite, communities transform. When women lead, innovation grows. When women support one another, progress accelerates. Tonight, we lit a spark. Tomorrow, we will fan it into a flame."

VITAL NEW PLATFORM

The Women in ICT Botswana Chapter is set to become a vital platform for professional development, mentorship and collaboration, driving inclusivity and innovation within the local technology ecosystem.

With its strong connection to Women in TICON Africa, the Chapter promises to open doors for Botswana's women to make meaningful contributions to the continent's growing digital economy. ●

Cavista Technologies hosted the soft launch of the Women in ICT Chapter in Gaborone, Botswana

Elizabeth Masache has encouraged the Botswana Women in ICT Chapter to participate in TICON Africa activities

ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO STAND TALL AND LEAD WITH PRESENCE

The second instalment of the online Women in TICON Masterclass Series featured speakers Ethel Cofie and Cynthia Ofori-Dwumfuo offering insights into how women can command attention in the boardroom.

The session, titled '*Building Executive Presence & Personal Branding*', was once again moderated by Malebogo Khanda-Wiktor, Secretary General of the Botswana Information Technology Society (BITS).

Welcoming remarks were delivered by Elizabeth Chabaluka Masache, Chairperson of Women in TICON. Masache noted that the Women in TICON Masterclasses create space for "real conversations" and promote leadership growth in both technology and innovation.

Ethel Cofie, CEO and founder of EDEL Technology Consulting, began by explaining that her career in technology started "because I was curious and wanted to figure out how to build things".

She founded Women in Tech as she realised there was a need to bring women together in a male-dominated field. "I wanted to discover how we women could learn from and open doors for one another," she noted in her introduction.

Cynthia Ofori-Dwumfuo is Chief Marketing Communications and Customer Experience Officer for GCB Bank and the Board Chairperson of the Springboard Road Show Foundation, which is funded by Mastercard.

With a strong background in public relations and brand development, Ofori-Dwumfuo is a clear advocate for women in leadership. She praised the "strong

"IT'S ABOUT ANCHORING YOURSELF IN COMPETENCE, NOT WAITING FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S VALIDATION." – ETHEL COFIE

❮ Ethel Cofie is the founder of EDEL Technology Consulting, which was named IT Consulting Firm of the Year at the Ghana Telecom & IT Awards (GITTA) in 2017

PHOTO: TICON AFRICA

women bosses" who helped her in the early years of her career but noted she would likely have benefited more had she been privy to many of the insights shared in forums such as Women in TICON.

LEARNING TO COMMAND THE ROOM WITH AUTHORITY

How can women stand tall in boardrooms in which they are underrepresented?

Cofie said this entails occupying space "unapologetically" and choosing to be visible over remaining silent.

"It's about anchoring yourself in competence, not waiting for someone else's validation," she told Masterclass attendees. "I remind myself I've earned my seat, and I bring value that speaks louder than any voice."

Ofori-Dwumfuo noted that she initially struggled to assert her presence as she is slim and looks younger than she is, but she learnt how to command with authority. She relayed advice given to her by a former female manager: "When you walk into a room and talk, everyone forgets about how you look. It's about what you're saying and how you're delivering it."

She confided that she doesn't necessarily have complete confidence when entering a boardroom, but this can be developed. "A lot of the time we professionals are nervous, anxious or scared, but we have found a way to move beyond it," she said, adding that she "puts on her Cynthia" when entering a room, adopting self-assurance.

CONFRONT CHALLENGES AND SET THE BOUNDARIES

Ofori-Dwumfuo shared tips for navigating and addressing offensive comments and microaggressions in the workplace. She no longer attempts to "ease the awkwardness" and makes a point of calling out hostility rather than ignoring it. One should also set boundaries and expectations early on, she explained.

Cofie agreed, adding: "I was told at the beginning of my journey that disagreeing would 'tank' my career – but now I speak the truth."

MASTER PUBLIC SPEAKING EARLY IN YOUR CAREER

Public speaking is not always comfortable for women – but it's a skill worth mastering. For Cofie, it was a deliberate strategy as it gave her greater confidence to pursue her goals.

Although she has a Master's degree in distributed systems, when she returned to Ghana to start her own business, "people asked who this little girl was trying to sell us software". She learnt to speak up by taking on the persona of the most confident person she knew – her mother. "This helped me to forget myself for a bit," she admitted.

Cynthia Ofori-Dwumfuo handing an award to Pheodor Mundia from Kenya at the African Marketing Confederation Awards ceremony held in Accra, Ghana on 23 August 2025

However, you don't necessarily need a loud voice to lead, she said, and introverts can do so "quietly but powerfully". Introverts don't need to dominate a room, but they may want to learn how to "speak a little bit more" and "swoop in and speak up," as women are often apt to be polite and "wait their turn" to speak.

Ofori-Dwumfuo added it's a good idea to be yourself as this makes you more memorable. "I'm naturally a little weird and awkward, and I have stopped trying to be less so," she explained. "This is who I am, and it's worked for me. It helps to deliver your message without taking yourself too seriously." However, she cautioned women not to be self-deprecating.

CULTIVATE APPROPRIATE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Ofori-Dwumfuo pointed out that relationship-building goes a long way towards making her comfortable in a boardroom. "I never walk into a meeting without having spoken to all key stakeholders," she said. "It's important that all parties have heard what I have to say, since I've already engaged them on their concerns and interests."

She explained the strategic importance of building influence and identifying allies, as well as learning how to insert yourself in conversations. "Nobody will take you seriously if you're just waiting to be called," she said.

ALWAYS BE YOURSELF AND SHOW UP AUTHENTICALLY

Both Cofie and Ofori-Dwumfuo said they're grateful to be able to be themselves – although this has not always been the case. "I love brass rings and earrings, but wondered if I should tone it down before meeting the CEO of a particular company," Cofie recalls.

"However, when I met her, I noticed she wore multiple earrings and rings. We would have connected immediately if I had shown up exactly as I was. Nowadays, I bring the fullness of myself into the professional arena."

Ofori-Dwumfuo said that she still shows up as seriously as she can, notwithstanding her love for bright-coloured hair. "I'm delivering on all fronts, but I'm still authentic," she pointed out.

BE STRATEGIC ABOUT YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Both agreed that having a presence on social media is vital, but one should be intentional about it and not post too often, as this requires a significant time commitment. "Engage with and follow the right people – you don't have to accept every LinkedIn invitation, as this may change the type of engagements you have," noted Ofori-Dwumfuo.

It's also necessary to sift through networking and speaking opportunities to assess which are real, valid, and important enough, or you waste your own time. ●

Rapid digital transformation is enabling Ghana to navigate a new path forward – including in tourism where marketing, technology and culture converge

GHANA'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: A BLUEPRINT FOR AFRICA'S TECH-DRIVEN FUTURE

Richard Kafui Amanfu explores how Ghana is not just participating in Africa's digital future, but helping to shape the transformation.

Ghana is rapidly emerging as a continental leader in digital transformation, driven by a bold vision to build a smart, inclusive and innovation-led economy. From infrastructure development to policy reform, the country is laying the foundation for a future where technology, data and human capital converge to unlock new opportunities for growth and resilience.

As Africa stands on the cusp of a digital renaissance, TICON Africa emerges as a pivotal platform to showcase and scale transformative innovations across the continent. The 2025 TICON Africa conference held recently in Accra brought together visionaries, technologists, policymakers and entrepreneurs to chart a bold course for Africa's tech-driven future.

At the heart of this movement is Ghana – a nation whose digital transformation journey exemplifies what is possible when strategic vision meets inclusive execution. From pioneering infrastructure projects

PHOTOS: GHANA NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AUTHORITY; YOUTUBE; AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA; LASIBA VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

and AI governance frameworks to empowering youth through digital skills and redefining identity management, Ghana is not just participating in Africa's digital future, it is helping to shape it.

This article explores how Ghana's initiatives offer a replicable blueprint for other African nations, and why TICON Africa is the platform to align, amplify and act.

FROM DIGITAL DEPENDENCE TO DIGITAL DETERMINATION

At the heart of Ghana's digital strategy is a decisive shift from digital dependence to digital determination.

This means moving beyond the passive consumption of imported technologies and toward the active creation of homegrown solutions tailored to African realities. It means building robust infrastructure, fostering inclusive innovation, and regulating responsibly to protect citizens while enabling progress.

One of the most ambitious projects currently underway is the Ghana-UAE Tech and Innovation Hub in Dawa. This US$1-billion initiative will span 25 square kilometres and is expected to attract over 11,000 global companies under the PCFC (Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation) umbrella – including tech giants like Google, Apple, Microsoft, Oracle, Meta, IBM and Alphabet. The hub will serve as a magnet for talent, trade and technology, with Phase One set to begin in 2026 and completion targeted for 2027.

Complementing this is the One Million Coders Programme, which aims to train one million Ghanaian youth over four years in artificial intelligence and machine learning, cyber security and data protection, and other essential digital skills to thrive in the modern economy.

Through partnerships with Huawei, MTN, Amazon Web Services and Oracle, Ghana is building a generation of digital creators and problem-solvers equipped to lead in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Ghana is also developing a National Data Exchange, a secure and interoperable platform for trusted public-private data sharing. This initiative will enhance transparency, efficiency and evidence-based policymaking across sectors.

THE NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM: THE GHANA CARD IS A SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

A cornerstone of Ghana's digital transformation is the National Identification System, spearheaded by the National Identification Authority (NIA).

Through the issuance of the Ghana Card, the country has established a single source of truth for identity management, enabling seamless authentication across government services, financial institutions, healthcare, education and more. The Ghana Card integrates biometric data and is linked to various national databases – including the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), and the Electoral Commission.

This interoperability is transforming service delivery, reducing fraud and enhancing data accuracy across sectors.

As of mid-2025, over 18-million Ghanaians have been enrolled, making the Ghana Card one of the most comprehensive digital identity systems on the continent. It is now a mandatory requirement for accessing public services, registering SIM cards, opening bank accounts, and even voting. This unified identity framework is enabling Ghana to build a digitally inclusive economy, where every citizen can participate securely and confidently.

POLICY REFORM AND A.I. LEADERSHIP

Ghana's Ministry of Communications, Digital Technology and Innovation is actively reviewing and updating legislation to reflect the realities of the digital age.

This includes the development of a National AI Strategy, the transition of the National Information Technology Agency (NITA) into a regulatory body, and investments in digital infrastructure,

The Ghana Card is transforming service delivery, reducing fraud and enhancing data accuracy

The One Million Coders Programme aims to train one million Ghanaian youth over four years in artificial intelligence and machine learning, cyber security and data protection, and other essential digital skills

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- Academy
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- Membership administration: Recommendation letters, attestations and networking
- Professional Development Training and Certifications

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- ICT Consultancy and Solutions for businesses
- Curriculum review for educational institutions (from basic to tertiary)
- Job placement and recruitment of experts for companies
- IT Human Resource Provider

Academy

- Coding Program (for kids, teens, and adults) in web technologies
- Professional Skills Development - Python for Data Science for professionals; Cybersecurity; Data Protection; Internet Governance
- National Teaching Council accreditation – Continuous Professional Development for teachers
- Digital skills education (basic, intermediate, advanced)

Public Awareness

Articles publication in dedicated column (ICT insight with Institute of ICT Professionals) in

- the Business & Financial Times news paper and other digital portals.
- Workshops, Seminars, Symposiums, and Trainings for Professional Development in emerging technology areas such as Data science, Cybersecurity, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Data Protection, Cloud Computing.
- Quarterly Symposiums – Industry – Academia Tech Dialogue (INDAC-TED); Cybersecurity Awareness
- Annual Tech Job Fair (TJF)
- Annual Tech Entrepreneurs Forum (TEF)
- Advocacy – Women in Tech, Girls in ICT
- Radio and Television programs

MAJOR INITIATIVES

TJF TECH JOB FAIR | CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS | TEF TECH ENTREPRENEURS FORUM | INDAC-TED Industry-Academia Tech Dialogue

Early-Start Skills Development
ICT skills training for young ones from "early start" in digital skills, various computer programming languages, web technologies, digital design and creative coding, etc.

Professional Skills Development
ICT skills training and continous professional development for students, young graduates and professionals. Emerging technology training and other forms of capacity building to support the digital transformation agenda of the country.

Industry-led Public education
ICT public education and sensitisation through media engagements and publications online, on radio, television, newspaper and social media.

Members Comprising ICT Professionals from Government, Academia, Corporate enterprises, Start-ups and Students.

Thousands exposed to Coding / Programming and other emerging skills in Ghana and abroad.

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innovation ecosystems and data synchronisation.

The country has also convened a Ministerial AI Bootcamp, one of only two such exercises on the continent, to shape responsible AI governance and strategy. These efforts reflect Ghana's ambition to become the AI capital of West Africa, driving innovation while safeguarding digital sovereignty.

MARKETING: AFRICA'S STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

While technology builds the future, marketing tells the story.

In Africa's evolving markets, marketing is not just a tool, it is a strategic advantage. It connects innovation to people, builds trust and drives adoption. It is how Africa can brand itself not as a continent of challenges, but as a continent of possibilities.

Ghana's marketing institutions are playing a critical role in this transformation. By promoting local innovations, cultural heritage and tourism assets, they are helping to shape global perceptions and unlock new markets. The synergy between marketing and technology is enabling small businesses to scale, startups to attract investment, and governments to engage citizens more effectively.

PAN-AFRICAN INTEGRATION: THE AfCFTA OPPORTUNITY

Ghana's leadership in digital transformation is closely tied to its role in Pan-African integration.

As host of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat based in Accra, Ghana is at the heart of efforts to create the world's largest single market, connecting 1.5-billion people across 55 countries.

AfCFTA is more than a trade agreement; it is a blueprint for industrialisation, innovation and inclusive growth.

Ghana is working closely with the AfCFTA Secretariat and member states to develop digital trade protocols, e-commerce platforms and cross-border payment systems that will make trade faster, cheaper and more inclusive.

Technology and marketing are critical enablers of AfCFTA. They can help African businesses reach new customers, optimise logistics and compete globally. They can also support the harmonisation of standards and the development of resilient supply chains across the continent.

TOURISM: A DIGITAL GATEWAY TO AFRICA'S CULTURE AND COMMERCE

Tourism is another sector where marketing, technology and culture converge. Ghana's 'Year of Return' (a 2019 initiative that invited the African diaspora, particularly descendants of enslaved Africans, to visit Ghana to reconnect with their heritage) and 'Beyond the Return' (a 10-year cultural, historical and economic initiative launched in 2020) campaigns have demonstrated the power of storytelling, heritage and digital engagement.

These initiatives have attracted global attention and positioned Ghana as a gateway to African heritage and hospitality. Africa must now scale these efforts continent-wide. Digital platforms can be used to promote destinations, streamline visa processes and enhance visitor experiences. Imagine a continent where

> ❮ Ghana is working with AfCFTA and member states to develop digital trade protocols, e-commerce platforms and cross-border payment systems

a tourist can plan a multi-country trip with a single app, pay seamlessly across borders, and experience the richness of Africa's culture, cuisine and creativity. That is the Africa we must build; an Africa that is open, connected and celebrated.

TOWARD A SMART, SOVEREIGN AFRICA

Ghana's digital transformation is not just about infrastructure; it is about people. It is about creating a knowledge-based society and a smart economy. It is about promoting digital equity, enhancing climate resilience and protecting consumers. It is about building a transparent and enabling environment for innovation and investment.

The country's efforts are a model for the continent. They demonstrate that with vision, collaboration and strategic investment, Africa can leapfrog legacy systems and build a future that is smart, sustainable and sovereign.

A CONTINENTAL CALL TO ACTION

Ghana's digital transformation journey presents a compelling blueprint for the continent. From artificial intelligence and emerging technologies to digital infrastructure, data governance, and future-ready skills, Ghana's strategic initiatives are tangible expressions of innovation in action.

Flagship projects such as the Dawa Tech Hub, the One Million Coders Programme and the Ghana Card ecosystem are not merely national milestones, but continental models of what is possible when vision meets execution.

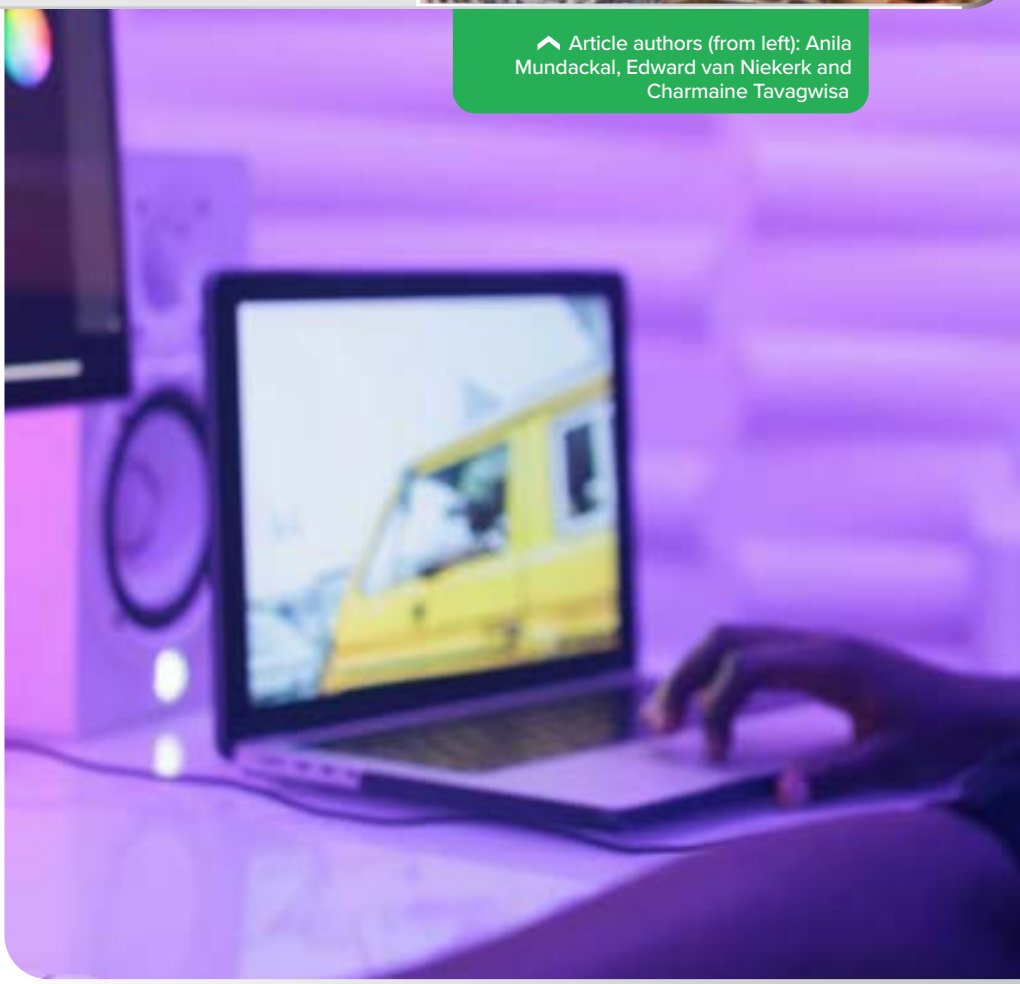
The blueprint is here. The time is now. As Africa's tech pulse beats stronger than ever, Ghana's experience stands as a call to action for governments, businesses and citizens alike to embrace innovation, invest in talent, act boldly, collaborate deeply and build the Africa we want.

Richard Kafui Amanfu is Executive Director of the Institute of ICT Professionals Ghana (IIPGH). IIPGH is a member of the Technology Information Confederation Africa and hosted the 2025 TICON Africa conference held in Accra. ●

EDUCATION IN AFRICA: TECH IS ONLY PART OF THE SOLUTION

Challenges persist, but technology can boost African education by improving literacy, numeracy, or teaching quality. By **Anila Mundackal, Charmaine Tavagwisa** and **Edward van Niekerk**.

Article authors (from left): Anila Mundackal, Edward van Niekerk and Charmaine Tavagwisa



For centuries, education on the continent has been based on communal learning. In Akan, Zulu, Yoruba and other cultures, learning occurred through storytelling, observation and participation in daily activities. Education was an inextricable part of life. Elders and experienced community members played critical roles in transmitting knowledge and values.

Colonialism disrupted this system. Mother-tongue learning and community-based teaching were replaced by formal, individual-centred education. Efforts such as first President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere's Education for Self-Reliance in the 1960s and 1970s sought to restore education's communal nature, emphasising collective development and community participation, but these faced resistance.

Many challenges persist. Tracking data across the continent remains difficult, but what is available paints a sobering picture: nearly one in three African children does not complete primary school. Internet penetration stands at about 43%, compared to a global average of 68%. The divide between the haves and the have-nots, the urban and the rural, the wealthy and the poor, has become a significant challenge in the African educational landscape.

PROGRESS BEING MADE

Education has the power to reduce this inequality, but uneven access to learning means progress is slow. When investment and commitment meet, however, improvement occurs. While internet availability is low, it is nonetheless a 400% increase in comparison with 2010.

Building schools in Burkina Faso improved both attendance and learning. Reducing or eliminating school fees consistently boosts educational outcomes, while school feeding programmes improve both access and academic performance. Through these and many other initiatives, the number of children completing primary school rose from 46% in 1970 to 68% in 2010, and the proportion completing lower secondary schooling increased from 22% to 40%.

Providing students with tablets is meaningless if there are no physical schools to attend. Access to free Khan Academy online lessons offers little value if parents cannot afford schooling. Interactive whiteboards, drones, laptops, internet access and artificial intelligence are futile if children are hungry. Lack of attendance is a serious obstacle to learning, as is some teachers' lack of content and pedagogical knowledge.

Programmes targeting attendance have shown some success. In Côte d'Ivoire, text messages sent to parents and teachers improved attendance of both learners and teachers. Improving teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills has likewise shown promise, though results vary.

In Malawi, teacher development proved effective only when combined with strong parental involvement. In Ghana, teacher training in specific pedagogical approaches improved literacy and numeracy, while curriculum training in Rwanda increased learners' extracurricular participation but did not improve academic performance. While there is no single solution, these projects emphasise the importance of collaboration and sharing. If it works in Malawi, it might work in Zambia. If it was unsuccessful in

PHOTOS: BEN IWARA/UNSPLASH; GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA, GCIS

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE MATTER FAR LESS ON THE CONTINENT THAN SYSTEMS THAT MUST SUSTAIN THEM

❮ Digital tools are not just for access – they're enabling creative learning and skills development that prepare Africa's youth for a connected future

Nigeria, this information could aid other projects by avoiding erroneous repetition.

COMBINE TECHNOLOGY AND TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

Hardware and software matter far less than the systems that sustain them. Core issues such as basic internet access, digital literacy among learners and teachers, hunger, and safety must be addressed. While technology might not be the answer, it is the most powerful tool at our disposal.

In areas with electricity and internet access, educational technology is increasingly playing an important role. Across the continent, numerous technology-based initiatives are underway, many of which show promise. The majority focus on improving literacy, numeracy or the quality of teaching.

In Ghana, broadcasting teachers' lessons from urban areas to rural classrooms improved both literacy and numeracy. Using interactive whiteboards in urban areas of Senegal led to higher test scores. However, the evidence shows that technology alone is insufficient.

In Malawi, providing learners with access to Wikipedia boosted results in two subjects but not others. In Kenya, providing e-readers and tablets failed to improve literacy compared to traditional approaches. In South Africa, virtual teacher coaches were less effective than in-person mentors. A great deal of cooperation, collaboration and research is needed to understand what works, what doesn't, and why.

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

Higher education provides more fertile ground for educational technologies, as these institutions are typically urban, receive better funding, and have better infrastructure. Higher education saw one of Africa's most ambitious technological initiatives: the African Virtual University (AVU).

Launched in 1997 as a World Bank-supported project, the AVU aimed to expand access to tertiary education through ICT. While sceptics doubted its ability to bridge the digital divide, partnerships with governments, universities and private organisations gradually built the infrastructure needed to make virtual education a reality. Despite challenges such as limited infrastructure, power shortages, digital illiteracy and unreliable connectivity, the AVU persisted, expanding to 34 learning centres in 17 countries and serving more than 23,000 learners.

While Africa faces unique challenges, research on the impact of educational technologies in high-income countries paints a similar picture. What works in one instance is not guaranteed to work in all cases. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. The key lies in locally developed ICT solutions targeting real problems; solutions built for realistic implementation.

When the environment lacks or has limited internet connectivity, offline solutions can ensure uninterrupted education. Platforms such as Ghana's Asanka, which stands for All Subjects and New Knowledge Access, provide offline access to educational resources. Similarly, the edtech company Eneza Education in Kenya provides users with access to the national curriculum via SMS and web-based platforms. With divides between urban and rural resources, the DRC's virtual tutor initiative helped more than 10,000 learners succeed in mathematics.

Technology is not the solution. It's a tool that, when paired with sound policy and stakeholder support, can help Africa become a significant player in the global knowledge economy, and even redefine it.

Anila Mundackal – Department Head: Programming Sciences. Charmaine Tavagwisa – Department Head: Mathematical Sciences. Edward van Niekerk – Vocational Programme Coordinator. All at the Belgium Campus iTversity. ●

TOGOTECH REPRESENTS A NEW DAWN FOR TOGOLESE INNOVATION

Newly formed TogoTech is anchored in a long-term vision whereby technology becomes a lever for growth, inclusion and employment.

The TogoTech initiative aims to connect innovators, investors and policymakers to accelerate Togo's technology sector

October 24, 2025, will remain a landmark date in Togo's digital ecosystem. On that day, at the Onomo Hotel in Lomé, 13 local startups united their voices to establish TogoTech, a federating platform conceived to propel Togolese technology toward a new dimension.

Entrepreneurs, institutional stakeholders, investors and young innovators all gathered around a shared conviction: to build a robust, unified and sustainable technological ecosystem.

Behind this initiative lies a simple yet powerful vision: to consolidate the scattered forces of the digital sector to collectively construct a stronger, more visible, and more competitive environment.

"We, as Togolese digital entrepreneurs, aspire to speak with one voice and build an environment conducive to innovation, job creation and competitiveness," declared Matina Egbidi, President of TogoTech, before an enthusiastic audience. Her address resonated as a call for unity, solidarity and boldness.

The member startups, representing diverse sectors, embody the creativity and versatility of Togolese technology. Together, they harbour the ambition to develop locally tailored solutions adapted to the nation's realities, whilst positioning Togo within the global dynamics of digital transformation.

The intervention by Madame Cina Lawson, Minister of Public Service Efficiency and Digital Transformation, reinforced the symbolic significance of the occasion.

"This initiative illustrates the maturity of a generation of entrepreneurs determined to contribute actively to our country's digital transformation. TogoTech embodies this determination to unite forces in building a structured, dynamic and competitive ecosystem," she affirmed, commending the resolve of the sector's emerging leaders.

More than a mere association, TogoTech aspires to serve as a driving force to support, finance and promote local innovations. Its ambition transcends the simple pooling of resources: it is anchored in a long-term vision whereby technology becomes a lever for growth, inclusion and employment.

In furtherance of this objective, the nascent organisation has formalised a strategic partnership with Cyber Defense Africa to strengthen the security of local digital solutions, as well as a legal collaboration with Aquereburu & Partners law firm, ensuring a framework adapted to the dynamics of innovation.

Through the launch of TogoTech, Togolese startups have made a bold statement: they believe in their potential and in the power of collective action. In a world where technology shapes economies and transforms societies, this alliance marks a decisive step toward a future in which Togo emerges as a pivotal player in African digital innovation. ●

The famous Palais de Lomé in the capital city. TogoTech intends making Togo a pivotal player in African digital innovation

PHOTOS: TOGOTECH; PALAIS DE LOMÉ

TOGOTECH : LE SOUFFLE NOUVEAU DE L'INNOVATION TOGOLAISE

La nouvelle société TogoTech s'inscrit dans une vision à long terme selon laquelle la technologie devient un levier de croissance, d'inclusion et d'emploi.

L'initiative TogoTech vise à mettre en relation les innovateurs, les investisseurs et les décideurs politiques afin d'accélérer le développement du secteur technologique au Togo

Le 24 octobre 2025 restera une date symbolique pour l'écosystème numérique togolais. Ce jour-là, à l'hôtel Onomo à Lomé, treize startups locales ont uni leurs voix pour donner naissance à TogoTech, une plateforme fédératrice pensée pour propulser la tech togolaise vers une nouvelle dimension. Entrepreneurs, acteurs institutionnels, investisseurs, jeunes innovateurs... tous réunis autour d'une même conviction : bâtir un écosystème technologique fort, uni et durable.

Derrière cette initiative, une idée simple mais puissante : fédérer les forces éparses du numérique pour construire ensemble un environnement plus fort, plus visible et plus compétitif. « Nous, entrepreneurs du numérique togolais, souhaitons parler d'une seule voix et construire un environnement propice à l'innovation, à la création d'emplois et à la compétitivité », a déclaré Matina Egbidi, présidente de TogoTech, devant un parterre conquis. Son discours a résonné comme un appel à l'unité, à la solidarité et à l'audace.

Les startups membres, issues de secteurs variés incarnent la diversité et la créativité de la tech togolaise. Ensemble, elles ambitionnent de faire émerger des solutions locales adaptées aux réalités du pays, tout en inscrivant le Togo dans la dynamique mondiale de la transformation digitale.

L'intervention de Madame Cina Lawson, Ministre de l'Efficacité des Services Public et de la Transformation Numérique, est venue renforcer la portée symbolique de l'événement.

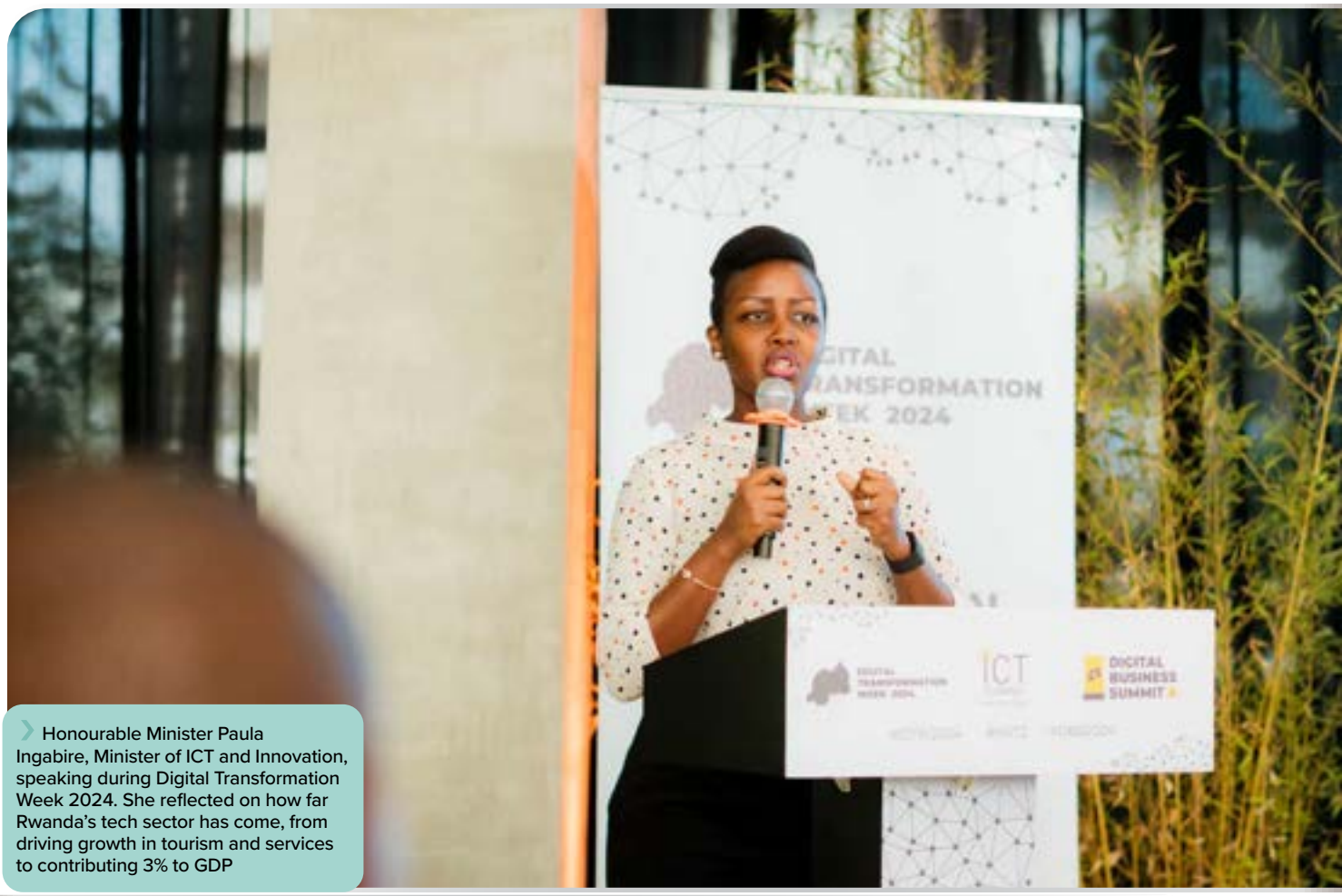
« Cette initiative illustre la maturité d'une génération d'entrepreneurs décidés à contribuer activement à la transformation numérique de notre pays. TogoTech incarne cette volonté d'unir les forces pour bâtir un écosystème structuré, dynamique et compétitif », a-t-elle affirmé, saluant la détermination des jeunes acteurs du secteur.

Plus qu'une simple association, TogoTech se veut une force motrice pour accompagner, financer et valoriser les innovations locales. Son ambition dépasse la seule mutualisation des moyens : elle s'inscrit dans une vision à long terme où la technologie devient un levier de croissance, d'inclusion et d'emploi. Dans cette logique, la jeune organisation a d'ailleurs officialisé un partenariat stratégique avec Cyber Defense Africa, pour renforcer la sécurité des solutions numériques locales, ainsi qu'une collaboration juridique avec le cabinet Aquereburu& Partners, garantissant un cadre adapté à la dynamique de l'innovation.

En lançant TogoTech, les startups togolaises posent un acte fort : celui de croire en leur potentiel et en la puissance du collectif. Dans un monde où la technologie façonne les économies et transforme les sociétés, cette alliance marque une étape décisive vers un avenir où le Togo devient un acteur incontournable du numérique africain. ●

Le célèbre Palais de Lomé dans la capitale. TogoTech entend faire du Togo un acteur central de l'innovation numérique en Afrique

PHOTO: TOGOTECH; PALAIS DE LOMÉ



Honourable Minister Paula Ingabire, Minister of ICT and Innovation, speaking during Digital Transformation Week 2024. She reflected on how far Rwanda's tech sector has come, from driving growth in tourism and services to contributing 3% to GDP

RWANDA CHAMBER IS DRIVING INCLUSIVE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Rwanda's journey toward becoming a knowledge-based economy is rooted in its commitment to embracing technology. At the heart of this transformation is the Rwanda ICT Chamber.

Since its establishment in 2011, the ICT Chamber has positioned itself as the voice of Rwanda's private technology industry. Working in close collaboration with the Government of Rwanda, development partners and industry stakeholders, the Chamber champions a vision of a robust, inclusive, and sustainable digital economy.

Today, it represents more than 540 companies and organisations. These span diverse clusters such as fintech, e-commerce, drones and robotics, IT hardware and software solutions, infrastructure and connectivity, multimedia, artificial intelligence, edtech, healthtech, agritech, and innovation hubs.

This diversity reflects Rwanda's ambition to create a digital ecosystem that not only drives economic growth but also fosters social inclusion and resilience.

A DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM THAT DRIVES ECONOMIC GROWTH AND FOSTERS RESILIENCE & INCLUSION

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

As of October 2025, in line with its mission to empower businesses through technology, the Rwanda ICT Chamber has supported:

- 623 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- 152 start-ups.
- 3 cooperatives.
- 88 digital agents.

These interventions, delivered through strategic programmes, accelerator initiatives and innovation partnerships, have helped enterprises adopt digital tools, improve efficiency, and create jobs.

THRIVING TECH ECOSYSTEM

Rwanda's digital economy is not evolving in isolation. It is guided by the National Strategy for Transformation 2024-2029, which prioritises technology as a driver of socio-economic progress. Within this framework, the ICT Chamber plays a pivotal role in shaping initiatives that position Rwanda as a continental hub for innovation.

Initiatives such as Kigali Innovation City,

PHOTOS: RWANDA ICT CHAMBER

DTW Week 2025

One of the Chamber's flagship collaborations is Digital Transformation Week (DTW), an annual event that brings together over 1,000 participants – including techpreneurs, regulators, development partners and the general public. This year held on 15-19 December, DTW runs under the theme '*Inclusive Digital Transformation for a Sustainable Digital Economy*'.

The week-long programme, which aligns with the National Strategy for Transformation, is organised in partnership with the Ministry of ICT and Innovation, the Rwanda Information Society Authority (RISA) and the Rwanda ICT Chamber. It features workshops, webinars, hands-on sessions and media engagement, with the intention of helping organisations and individuals to understand, adapt to and leverage digital transformation in Rwanda and beyond.

For membership inquiries, partnerships or more information, contact info@ictchamber.rw or visit www.ictchamber.rw

Members of Rwanda's ICT community gathered at the ICT Chamber Members Symposium 2025 to shape the future of inclusive digital transformation

HangaPitchFest, iHuzo, Hanga Hubs and Digital Transformation Week are platforms that position the country as a continental hub for tech-driven entrepreneurship and smart governance.

The ICT Chamber remains a key partner in these initiatives, bridging innovators, policymakers, investors and academia to accelerate Rwanda's vision of becoming a cashless, knowledge-based economy. ●

RWANDA'S CHAMBER BRIDGES INNOVATORS, INVESTORS, ACADEMIA AND POLICYMAKERS

Platforms for Rwanda's digital empowerment

Kigali Innovation City (KIC) is a flagship project designed to position Rwanda as a Pan-African hub for technology and innovation. Backed by the Government of Rwanda and Africa50, KIC is a public–private partnership developing a 61-hectare smart, mixed-use district within Kigali's Special Economic Zone. The master plan integrates universities, research centres, Grade-A offices, startup incubators, residential housing, retail spaces and hospitality facilities. All of these are built with green and sustainable design principles.

HangaPitchFest is Rwanda's largest in-person technology event and a premier platform for showcasing tech-enabled startups. Launched in 2021 by the Ministry of ICT and Innovation and Rwanda Development Board, the initiative aims to ignite innovation, empower young entrepreneurs, and accelerate the country's digital transformation. Now in its fifth edition, HangaPitchFest has evolved into a national symbol of creativity and collaboration. Over the years, it has supported over 200 startups, created 190 innovation hubs, and catalysed significant investments, fuelling Rwanda's vision of a knowledge-based economy.

iHuzo aims to accelerate the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises through an expanded e-commerce sector. It was launched in September 2020 by Access to Finance Rwanda (AFR) in partnership with Rwanda ICT Chamber, Mastercard Foundation, and BFA Global, largely in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme focuses on digital onboarding, capacity building, and linking micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with financial services to foster inclusive growth and job creation in Rwanda's digital economy.

Hanga Hubs, a national initiative led by the Rwanda Information Society Authority (RISA) in partnership with the European Union, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Rwanda ICT Chamber, is reaching secondary cities and is therefore no longer confined to the capital, Kigali. These hubs – located in Rubavu, Rusizi, Muhanga, Nyagatare, Musanze, Rwamagana and Huye – are designed to close the digital divide by equipping young entrepreneurs with the tools and skills to thrive. Backed by a €4.8-million (US$5.5-million) investment from the European Union, the programme aims to tackle unemployment and bridge Rwanda's digital skills gap by creating spaces for ideation, incubation and market entry. Each hub offers state-of-the-art infrastructure, including 3D printers and CNC machines, enabling innovators to prototype and develop tech-driven solutions.

HOW CAN AFRICA TAKE CHARGE OF ITS OWN A.I. DESTINY?

AI ethics is an emerging multidisciplinary field that studies how to optimise the beneficial impact of artificial intelligence (AI) while reducing adverse impacts. **Fiona Zerbst** spoke with Nazareen Ebrahim, an AI Ethics and policy practitioner at Naz Consulting International, about how Africa can take charge of its AI destiny.

Q: To begin with, what is AI ethics? What is the field about, and what led you to become an expert in it?

A: Ethics is a set of values that guide a person in making decisions and responding to others in ways that preserve dignity and serve the greater good. At its most basic, this is a person-to-person exchange.

› Ebrahim is an experienced moderator, keynote speaker and panel participant at technology, business and communications conferences and events, including AI Expo Africa in 2023, Global AI Summit in 2022, and AI Expo Africa 2022/2021

‹ Ebrahim delivering a keynote address on the African digital citizen at Afrotech Namibia in 2025

When you apply ethics to business or industry, the principles of justice and fair use remain applicable, but they are structured around the outcomes and responsibilities specific to that sector. Now, let's bring that into the AI context. If ethics is about guiding people to act justly and fairly toward others, AI ethics is about ensuring that algorithms, data and software systems deliver just, fair and equitable outcomes for all. This includes unintended users who may still be affected by a system designed for a specific purpose.

I stepped into this field because I noticed something missing: there weren't enough critical voices from an African perspective in the global AI ethics conversation. My personal passions – human rights, excellence in communication, and examining the human impact of technology – naturally converged here. Being a diverse voice in this space also matters. The ethical principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and fairness aren't abstract; they ensure that AI serves people across different contexts, cultures and realities. Adding African voices to this global dialogue helps ensure that AI doesn't simply replicate inequalities but has the potential to transform society in ways that are just, responsible and inclusive.

Q: What are the core principles of AI ethics, and why do these matter in an African context?

A: The core principles of AI ethics are transparency, accountability, responsibility and education. These sit alongside other widely recognised principles such as fairness, inclusivity, privacy, safety and human oversight. Taken together, they form the ethical compass that should guide how AI is designed, deployed and monitored.

Why do these matter in an African context? Two words: participation and ownership. Historically, Africa has been positioned as a site of extraction. Our minerals, labour, and increasingly our data are mined to feed global value chains in relationships that remain strategically imbalanced. The grip of Western imperialism and 'ownership' is still visible, even in this AI era.

At the same time, a lack of sustained political will to invest in infrastructure and innovation locally leaves citizens caught between dependency on external powers and exclusion from the AI economy altogether. If Africa doesn't shape the ethical rules of the game, we risk being shaped by them – often in ways that reinforce inequality.

We need to ensure that Africans are not just consumers of imported systems but active creators, regulators and owners of technology. Driving local insight and building public understanding is how we claim our stake in the AI age – on our own terms, and for the benefit of our people.

Q: African nations are data-rich but often infrastructure-poor. How can we balance the urgent need for AI-driven innovation with protecting data sovereignty, so that African data does not simply fuel Global North AI models?

A: The balance between innovation and sovereignty begins with strategic, targeted conversations between governments, local private sectors, and global technology firms. Too often, international companies arrive with 'solutions' for managing citizen data, but without frameworks that safeguard national interests. Governments must be equipped to negotiate from a position of strength.

This requires legislation that is both educated and flexible – laws that clearly define good and bad practices in data management, ownership and even remuneration. Without enforceable rules and meaningful penalties, African data risks becoming just another raw export fuelling Global North AI models. Sovereignty of data is inseparable from the project of building a responsible digital citizenry, which depends on ongoing public education about data rights and responsibilities.

However, confidence in sovereignty must be more than just rhetoric. It needs intentional investment in local projects that demonstrate African capacity to manage, analyse and monetise our own data. If Africa's voice can still be sidelined at the highest levels of global governance, then we must work even harder to ensure representation and agency in this era of AI.

Protecting data sovereignty is not about rejecting innovation; it's about making sure innovation serves Africans first.

Q: What would an authentically African AI ethics framework look like, and what philosophical or cultural traditions should inform it?

A: An authentically African AI ethics framework would stand on the same foundational principles we've discussed: transparency, accountability, responsibility and education, alongside fairness, inclusivity, privacy, safety and human oversight. However, what makes it distinct is that these principles are rooted in African philosophical and cultural traditions, rather than being imported wholesale from Western discourse.

Traditions like Ubuntu emphasise that 'a person is a person through other people' – a philosophy of communal dignity and interdependence. The Akan philosophy of Ghana builds on similar values of unity and collective responsibility. And Kenyan philosopher Henry Odera Oruka gave us a way to think about African thought through categories such as:

- Ethnophilosophy – collective worldviews of African cultures
- Philosophical sagacity – the wisdom of respected elders and community thinkers
- Professional philosophy – the use of modern methods, sometimes trained in the Western tradition
- Nationalist-ideological philosophy – drawing on traditional beliefs for political and social renewal, as seen in Nkrumah's Consciencism or Nyerere's Ujamaa.

These schools of thought remind us that African philosophy is not static – it is lived, diverse and pragmatic. They align with AI ethics because they foreground communal responsibility, respect for wisdom and the dignity of the collective.

This is in sharp contrast to Western traditions that prioritise the individual. Most AI models are trained on datasets and philosophies coded in that individualistic worldview, which often ignores the communal. An African framework would rebalance this: pairing the recognition of self with the obligation to preserve the dignity of others.

In practice, this means rethinking how we train AI models by embedding the wisdom of ethnic cultures, indigenous languages and religious traditions into datasets, and questioning Western labels of what constitutes 'rational' or 'fair.' It is not about rejecting universal principles but about rewriting them through a lens that honours the collective, ensures dignity, and recognises that no person or culture stands alone.

Q: If African languages, histories and identities are underrepresented in AI datasets, what risks do we face in terms of cultural erasure, and how can African technologists correct this imbalance?

A: The risk isn't only cultural erasure – it's exclusion. When African languages, histories and identities are absent from AI datasets, the danger is that Africans are denied the opportunity to fully participate in technologies reshaping education, work and everyday life.

It's less about being erased from the record and more about being sidelined from the future – but correcting this imbalance is already underway.

Projects such as Lelapa.ai and Masakhane are building language models and African datasets to train large language models. They focus on use cases such as transcription, conversation, translation and speech recognition – practical tools that open the door for African voices, languages and cultural contexts to be integrated into AI. But access alone isn't enough. Two other principles must anchor this work: ownership and rights. Who owns the data? Who profits from it? Who decides how it is used? Without clear answers, African datasets could once again be extracted without fair returns. Regulators and the private sector must work together in a determined and collaborative effort to ensure that African data is not only included but also on fair terms that protect end-users and strengthen local capacity. In short, representation in AI is not charity – it is sovereignty.

Q: The AU has begun discussing continental AI strategies, but regulation is still fragmented. Should Africa establish a pan-African AI governance body, or should regulation remain national but be aligned? What are the pros and cons?

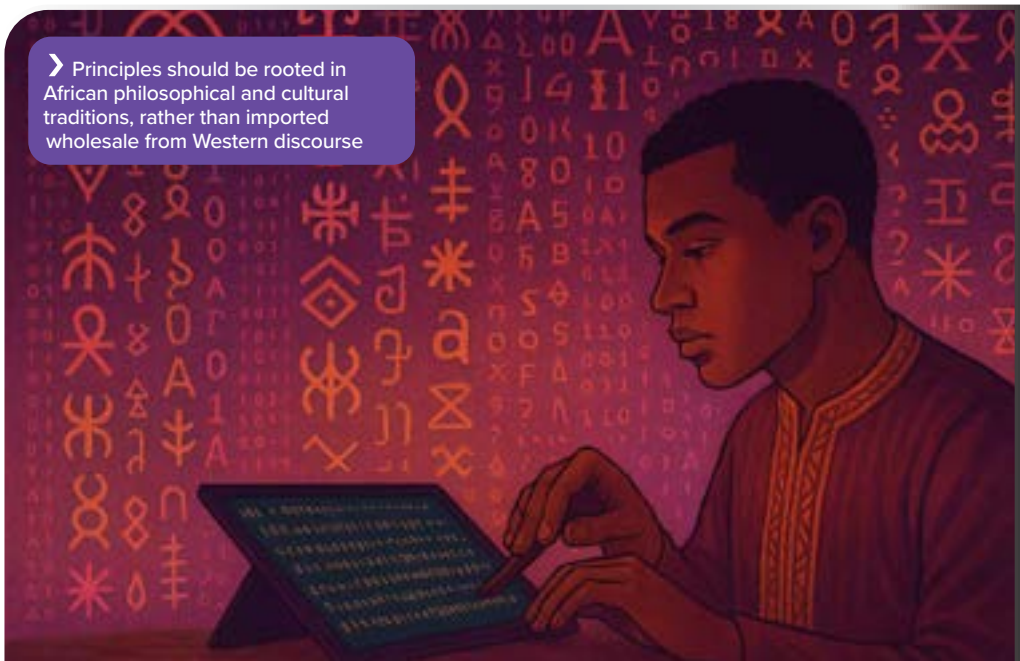
A: The question of whether Africa needs a pan-African AI governance body or should stick to national regulation exposes a deeper reality: governance itself looks very different across the continent. Just recently, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso announced their withdrawal from the International Criminal Court, arguing for "*indigenous mechanisms for the consolidation of peace and justice*". This stands in sharp contrast to South Africa, which continues to position itself as a constitutional democracy and rights-based model for the continent.

These differences illustrate why a single governance structure is challenging to enforce uniformly across the continent of Africa. The African Union could – and should – provide overall guidelines rooted in universal principles such as dignity, privacy, access and fairness. A continental framework would give Africa a stronger collective voice on the global stage, ensuring we are not rule-takers in AI but co-authors of international standards.

But the practice of regulation will inevitably vary at the national level. Countries differ in political systems, institutional capacity and priorities. A pan-African body risks being symbolic if it cannot secure buy-in or enforcement from diverse member states. National regulation, aligned with continental guidelines, may be more pragmatic, allowing flexibility while still aiming for coherence.

The real risk is that models of sovereign governance do not always guarantee the rights of citizens. In such cases, the protection of digital rights and responsibilities – the essence of a responsible digital citizenry – must be secured on a case-by-case basis, sometimes in spite of the state rather than through it.

In short, a hybrid approach may serve Africa best: continental principles, national implementation, and a vigilant civil society to hold both to account. ●



› Principles should be rooted in African philosophical and cultural traditions, rather than imported wholesale from Western discourse

PHOTO: MICROSOFT COPILOT; NAZAREEN EBRAHIM

AGENTIC AI: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF INNOVATION ACROSS AFRICA

In July 2025, TICON Africa held a fascinating online Masterclass on Agentic AI. Speaker Chris Wiggett, founder of DeltAI and a pioneer in AI transformation, engaged in a discussion with moderator Malebogo Khanda-Wiktor to explore the rise of intelligent systems redefining possibilities on the African continent.

The Masterclass was introduced by David Gowu, co-founder and immediate past Executive Director of the Institute of ICT Professionals Ghana (IIPGH) and President of TICON Africa, who called the topic "timely and exciting".

Wiggett began by noting that the world is facing an evolutionary event that will either pose a risk or present the biggest opportunity humans have ever encountered. Given that the world's biggest workforce will be found in Africa, the continent needs to move quickly to capitalise on the advent of AI – "the future of innovation in Africa", according to Wiggett.

MODEL CONTEXT PROTOCOL IS A POWERFUL DEVELOPMENT

The technology world is witnessing a fundamental shift in how AI systems work. Rather than building rigid, industry-specific solutions, companies are now developing 'agentic AI' – intelligent systems that can adapt and work across any sector by treating each challenge as a goal-oriented agent.

What makes this particularly powerful is a new development called Model Context Protocol, which allows AI to connect directly to virtually any data source – your emails, databases, customer records, or financial systems – without the complex data preparation that was previously required.

> THE TECHNOLOGY WORLD IS WITNESSING A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN HOW A.I. SYSTEMS WORK

"The three major AI platforms – ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini – now support these direct connections," Wiggett explained – meaning businesses can quickly deploy AI solutions that understand their specific context and data. AI allows us to "drift across verticals", he said, regardless of the industries in which we work.

RAISES QUESTIONS AROUND CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

The way we build software for clients is changing dramatically, said Wiggett.

We can now "build as people talk", creating applications in real-time as clients describe what they need. This is possible due to new developments, such as ChatGPT's OpenAI Operator, an AI agent that can perform tasks autonomously through web browser interactions.

"With the rise of these filing systems and virtual machines in operator agents, we'll see the contextual power significantly increase," said Wiggett.

Such agents use the contextual power of AI to understand and develop solutions on the spot. However, this raises important questions about data confidentiality. Businesses need to understand the implications for their sensitive information.

PROS AND CONS TO THE RISE OF A.I. IN AFRICA

While AI adoption can improve employee productivity and deliver profits for businesses, the transition from a labour-based to an intelligence-based economy carries some risks.

We will need to develop data centres on the continent – but this will require enormous computing power and vast amounts of electricity (AI alone requires around 90GW of electricity, said Wiggett).

On the plus side, because "AI learning happens by just doing", we don't have to spend too much time on training and certification. ●

PHOTO: TICON AFRICA

COMMENT L'AFRIQUE PEUT-ELLE PRENDRE EN MAIN SON DESTIN EN MATIÈRE D'IA ?

L'éthique de l'IA est un domaine multidisciplinaire émergent qui étudie comment optimiser l'impact bénéfique de l'intelligence artificielle (IA) tout en réduisant les impacts négatifs. **Fiona Zerbst** s'entretient avec Nazareen Ebrahim sur la manière dont l'Afrique peut prendre en charge son destin en matière d'IA.

Nazareen Ebrahim est une modératrice expérimentée, une conférencière principale et une participante à des panels lors de conférences et d'événements sur la technologie, les affaires et les communications. Elle est la fondatrice et PDG de Naz Consulting International

Ebrahim prononce un discours sur la citoyenneté numérique africaine à Afrotech Namibia en 2025

Q : Pour commencer, qu'est-ce que l'éthique de l'IA ? De quoi parle ce domaine et qu'est-ce qui vous a amené à devenir expert dans ce domaine ?

R : L'éthique est un ensemble de valeurs qui guident une personne dans ses prises de décisions et ses réactions envers les autres, de manière à préserver sa dignité et à servir le bien commun. Dans sa forme la plus simple, il s'agit d'un échange de personne à personne.

Lorsque vous appliquez l'éthique à une entreprise ou à une industrie, les principes de justice et d'utilisation équitable restent applicables, mais ils sont structurés autour des résultats et des responsabilités spécifiques à ce secteur. Maintenant, transposons cela dans le contexte de l'IA. Si l'éthique consiste à guider les gens pour qu'ils agissent de manière juste et équitable envers les autres, l'éthique de l'IA consiste à garantir que les algorithmes, les données et les systèmes logiciels fournissent des résultats justes, honnêtes et équitables pour tous. Cela inclut les utilisateurs non intentionnels qui peuvent néanmoins être affectés par un système conçu à des fins spécifiques.

Je me suis lancé dans ce domaine parce que j'ai remarqué quelque chose qui manquait : il n'y avait pas assez de voix critiques d'un point de vue africain dans le débat mondial sur l'éthique de l'IA. Mes passions personnelles – les droits de l'homme, l'excellence en communication et l'étude de l'impact humain de la technologie – ont naturellement convergé ici. Être une voix diversifiée dans cet espace est également important. Les principes éthiques de diversité, d'équité, d'inclusion et de justice ne sont pas abstraits ; ils garantissent que l'IA sert les personnes dans différents contextes, cultures et réalités. L'ajout de voix africaines à ce dialogue mondial contribue à garantir que l'IA ne se contente pas de reproduire les inégalités, mais qu'elle a le potentiel de transformer la société de manière juste, responsable et inclusive.

Q : Quels sont les principes fondamentaux de l'éthique de l'IA et pourquoi sont-ils importants dans un contexte africain ?

R : Les principes fondamentaux de l'éthique de l'IA sont la transparence, la responsabilité, la responsabilisation et l'éducation. Ces principes s'ajoutent à d'autres principes largement reconnus tels que l'équité, l'inclusion, la confidentialité, la sécurité et la surveillance humaine. Ensemble, ils forment la boussole éthique qui devrait guider la manière dont l'IA est conçue, déployée et surveillée.

Pourquoi ces éléments sont-ils importants dans un contexte africain ? Deux mots : participation et appropriation. Historiquement, l'Afrique a été positionnée comme un site d'extraction. Nos minéraux, notre travail et de plus en plus nos données sont exploités pour alimenter les chaînes de valeur mondiales dans des relations qui restent stratégiquement déséquilibrées. L'emprise de l'impérialisme occidental et de la « propriété » est toujours visible, même à l'ère de l'IA.

Dans le même temps, l'absence de volonté politique soutenue pour investir dans les infrastructures et l'innovation au niveau local laisse les citoyens pris entre la dépendance à l'égard des puissances extérieures et l'exclusion totale de l'économie de l'IA. Si l'Afrique ne façonne pas les règles éthiques du jeu, nous risquons d'être façonnés par elle – souvent d'une manière qui renforce les inégalités.

Nous devons veiller à ce que les Africains ne soient pas seulement des consommateurs de systèmes importés, mais des créateurs actifs, des régulateurs et des propriétaires de technologies. C'est en favorisant la connaissance locale et en renforçant la compréhension du public que nous revendiquons notre participation à l'ère de l'IA – selon nos propres conditions et au bénéfice de notre peuple.

Q : Les nations africaines sont riches en données mais souvent pauvres en infrastructures. Comment pouvons-nous équilibrer le besoin urgent d'innovation axée sur l'IA avec la protection de la souveraineté des données, afin que les données africaines ne servent pas simplement à alimenter les modèles d'IA du Nord global ?

❯ Un cadre africain associe la reconnaissance de soi à l'obligation de préserver la dignité d'autrui

L'équilibre entre innovation et souveraineté commence par des conversations stratégiques et ciblées entre les gouvernements, les secteurs privés locaux et les entreprises technologiques mondiales. Trop souvent, les entreprises internationales proposent des « solutions » pour gérer les données des citoyens, mais sans cadres permettant de protéger les intérêts nationaux. Les gouvernements doivent être équipés pour négocier en position de force.

Cela nécessite une législation à la fois éclairée et flexible – des lois qui définissent clairement les bonnes et les mauvaises pratiques en matière de gestion des données, de propriété et même de rémunération. Sans règles applicables et sans sanctions significatives, les données africaines risquent de devenir simplement une autre exportation brute alimentant les modèles d'IA du Nord. La souveraineté des données est indissociable du projet de construction d'une citoyenneté numérique responsable, qui passe par une éducation publique continue sur les droits et les responsabilités en matière de données.

Toutefois, la confiance dans la souveraineté doit être plus qu'une simple rhétorique. Il faut investir intentionnellement dans des projets locaux qui démontrent la capacité africaine à gérer, analyser et monétiser nos propres données. Si la voix de l'Afrique peut encore être mise à l'écart aux plus hauts niveaux de la gouvernance mondiale, alors nous devons travailler encore plus dur pour garantir sa représentation et son autonomie à l'ère de l'IA.

Protéger la souveraineté des données ne signifie pas rejeter l'innovation ; il s'agit de s'assurer que l'innovation serve d'abord les Africains.

Q : À quoi ressemblerait un cadre éthique de l'IA authentiquement africain, et quelles traditions philosophiques ou culturelles devraient l'éclairer ?

Un cadre éthique de l'IA authentiquement africain reposerait sur les mêmes principes fondamentaux que ceux dont nous avons parlé : transparence, responsabilité, responsabilisation et éducation, ainsi que l'équité, l'inclusivité, la confidentialité, la sécurité et la surveillance humaine. Cependant, ce qui le rend différent, c'est que ces principes sont enracinés dans les traditions philosophiques et culturelles africaines, plutôt que d'être importés en bloc du discours occidental.

Des traditions comme Ubuntu soulignent qu'« une personne est une personne à travers d'autres personnes » – une philosophie de dignité communautaire et d'interdépendance. La philosophie Akan du Ghana s'appuie sur des valeurs similaires d'unité et de responsabilité collective. Et le philosophe kenyan Henry Odera Oruka nous a donné une manière de penser la pensée africaine à travers des catégories telles que :

- Ethnophilosophie – visions du monde collectives des cultures africaines
- Sagacité philosophique – la sagesse des aînés respectés et des penseurs de la communauté
- Philosophie professionnelle – l'utilisation de méthodes modernes, parfois formées dans la tradition occidentale
- Philosophie nationaliste-idéologique – s'appuyant sur les croyances traditionnelles pour le renouveau politique et social, comme on le voit dans le conscientisme de Nkrumah ou l'Ujamaa de Nyerere.

Ces écoles de pensée nous rappellent que la philosophie africaine n'est pas statique : elle est vécue, diversifiée et pragmatique. Elles s'alignent sur l'éthique de l'IA car elles mettent en avant la responsabilité communautaire, le respect de la sagesse et la dignité du collectif.

Cela contraste fortement avec les traditions occidentales qui privilégient l'individu. La plupart des modèles d'IA sont formés sur des ensembles de données et des philosophies codés dans cette vision du monde individualiste, qui ignore souvent le communautaire. Un cadre africain permettrait de rééquilibrer cela : en associant la reconnaissance de soi à l'obligation de préserver la dignité d'autrui.

En pratique, cela signifie repenser la manière dont nous formons les modèles d'IA en intégrant la sagesse des cultures ethniques, des langues autochtones et des traditions religieuses dans les ensembles de données, et en remettant en question les étiquettes occidentales de ce qui constitue « rationnel » ou « juste ». Il ne s'agit pas de rejeter les principes universels, mais de les réécrire à travers une optique qui honore le collectif, garantit la dignité et reconnaît qu'aucune personne ou culture n'est seule.

Q : Si les langues, les histoires et les identités africaines sont sous-représentées dans les ensembles de données de l'IA, à quels risques sommes-nous confrontés en termes d'effacement culturel et comment les technologues africains peuvent-ils corriger ce déséquilibre ?

R : Le risque n'est pas seulement l'effacement culturel, mais aussi l'exclusion. Lorsque les langues, les histoires et les identités africaines sont absentes des ensembles de données de l'IA, le danger est que les Africains se voient refuser la possibilité de participer pleinement aux technologies qui transforment l'éducation, le travail et la vie quotidienne.

PHOTOS: MICROSOFT COPILOT; NAZAREEN EBRAHIM

Il ne s'agit pas tant d'être effacé des annales que d'être mis à l'écart de l'avenir – mais la correction de ce déséquilibre est déjà en cours.

Des projets tels que Lelapa.ai et Masakhane construisent des modèles linguistiques et des ensembles de données africains pour former de grands modèles linguistiques. Ils se concentrent sur des cas d'utilisation tels que la transcription, la conversation, la traduction et la reconnaissance vocale – des outils pratiques qui ouvrent la porte à l'intégration des voix, des langues et des contextes culturels africains dans l'IA. Toutefois, l'accès seul ne suffit pas. Deux autres principes doivent ancrer ce travail : la propriété et les droits. À qui appartiennent les données ? À qui profitent-elles ? Qui décide de la manière dont elles sont utilisées ? Sans réponses claires, les ensembles de données africains pourraient à nouveau être extraits sans retour sur investissement équitable. Les régulateurs et le secteur privé doivent travailler ensemble dans un effort déterminé et collaboratif pour garantir que les données africaines soient non seulement incluses, mais également à des conditions équitables qui protègent les utilisateurs finaux et renforcent les capacités locales. En bref, la représentation dans l'IA n'est pas de la charité – c'est de la souveraineté.

Q : L'UA a commencé à discuter des stratégies continentales en matière d'IA, mais la réglementation est encore fragmentée. L'Afrique devrait-elle créer un organisme panafricain de gouvernance de l'IA, ou la réglementation devrait-elle rester nationale mais être alignée ? Quels sont les avantages et les inconvénients ?

R : La question de savoir si l'Afrique a besoin d'un organisme panafricain de gouvernance de l'IA ou doit s'en tenir à la réglementation nationale révèle une réalité plus profonde : la gouvernance elle-même est très différente à travers le continent. Tout récemment, le Mali, le Niger et le Burkina Faso ont annoncé leur retrait de la Cour pénale internationale, plaidant pour des « *mécanismes autochtones de consolidation de la paix et de la justice* ». Cela contraste fortement avec l'Afrique du Sud, qui continue de se positionner comme une démocratie constitutionnelle et un modèle fondé sur les droits pour le continent.

Ces différences illustrent pourquoi il est difficile d'appliquer de manière uniforme une structure de gouvernance unique sur tout le continent africain. L'Union africaine pourrait – et devrait – fournir des lignes directrices générales fondées sur des principes universels tels que la dignité, la vie privée, l'accès et l'équité. Un cadre continental donnerait à l'Afrique une voix collective plus forte sur la scène mondiale, garantissant que nous ne sommes pas des preneurs de règles en matière d'IA mais des co-auteurs de normes internationales.

Mais la pratique de la réglementation variera inévitablement au niveau national. Les pays diffèrent en termes de systèmes politiques, de capacités institutionnelles et de priorités. Un organisme panafricain risque d'être symbolique s'il ne parvient pas à obtenir l'adhésion ou l'application de ses règles par les différents États membres. La réglementation nationale, alignée sur les lignes directrices continentales, peut être plus pragmatique, permettant une certaine flexibilité tout en visant la cohérence.

Le véritable risque est que les modèles de gouvernance souveraine ne garantissent pas toujours les droits des citoyens. Dans de tels cas, la protection des droits et des responsabilités numériques – l'essence même d'une citoyenneté numérique responsable – doit être assurée au cas par cas, parfois malgré l'État plutôt que par son intermédiaire.

En bref, une approche hybride pourrait servir au mieux les intérêts de l'Afrique : principes continentaux, mise en œuvre nationale et une société civile vigilante pour demander des comptes aux deux parties. ●

› Les principes devraient être ancrés dans les traditions philosophiques et culturelles africaines, plutôt que d'être importés en bloc du discours occidental

THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF AI: ARE WE LOSING THE HUMAN CONNECTION?

There are numerous practical and beneficial use cases for AI across many fields. However, the prominent usage appears to be personal and emotional support. What does this mean for the future of the technology? **Adam Craker** investigates.

Generative AI is well-embedded in the daily lives of millions, but a shift is underway that deserves closer scrutiny. In 2023, most conversations focused on how Gen AI would transform productivity. Streamlining tasks, automating workflows and accelerating innovation were our bread and butter. But by 2025, the data is telling a different story: the most common use of Gen AI is now personal and emotional support.

This may seem like progress. Technology is stepping in to help people cope with loneliness, anxiety and the pressures of modern life. But there is a deeper question worth asking: why is there such a widespread need for emotional support in the first place?

A.I. STEPS IN WHERE HUMAN CONNECTION FALTERS

Covid-19 lockdowns left more than an economic and health legacy. Those seismic months fundamentally changed how we interact, work and connect with one another. The norms established during lockdowns have persisted and, in many cases, deepened. Physical communities have thinned, and social interaction has increasingly shifted online. Those temporary behaviours intended to keep us safe have contributed to a new and more permanent kind of isolation.

Now, instead of rebuilding human connection, machines are becoming our companions and confidants. This is a turning point, and it's not a healthy one.

At iqbusiness, we've seen firsthand how Gen AI can empower teams and drive operational gains. These are tangible, valuable applications that no modern business can do without. But leaders cannot ignore the parallel trend unfolding before us: Gen AI is stepping in where human connection is faltering, and that is what needs mending.

THE TOP 6 GEN A.I. USES

In recent analysis of the use cases of Gen AI in *Harvard Business Review*, Marc Zao-Sanders revealed that the top 10 most widespread uses have shown a significant shift between 2024 and 2025. In 2024, 'Generating ideas' was number one (now down to number six), but has been replaced by 'Therapy/companionship' (up from two in 2024).

1. Therapy/companionship

AI-powered tools are helping people manage stress, depression and emotional regulation. But this surge signals something more: a deep deficit in human relationships. Leaders in businesses, government, schools, places of worship and communities need to take this

PHOTOS: MICROSOFT COPILOT; ADOBE FIREFLY; IQBUSINESS

moment seriously and not lose sight of what – and who – is at stake in the digital revolution.

2. Organising my life (new entrant)
Many people are using Gen AI tools to track, motivate and organise their goals or tasks to enhance efficiencies and accountability. But in practice, this often results in fewer opportunities for collaboration and moments for professional assistance and insights.

3. Finding purpose (new entrant)
Humans have sought purpose since time immemorial, and Gen AI has not changed that. The wise would heed the words of Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl: "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Are we choosing our own way or allowing tech to make the choices for us?

4. Enhanced learning
AI tutors and adaptive learning platforms make education and learning more personal and accessible for those online. But without mentors or community engagement, much of the learning lacks context and lived insight, and many essential interpersonal skills necessary to grow and succeed are being lost.

5. Generating code for professionals
Gen AI is widely used by designers and product teams to jumpstart ideation, and developers lean on AI co-pilots to write and debug code.

This is where Gen AI can have immense and sustainable value. It's efficient, but as reliance increases, deep skills may diminish as we reward speed over exploration and novelty over authenticity.

6. Generating ideas
We've moved quickly from our suspicion of Gen AI just two years ago to everyday use in almost every personal and professional setting. It's use for prompting ideas has dropped from one to six this year as it's overtaken by more alarming uses.

Other uses in the 2025 top 10 are fun and nonsense, improving code for pros, creativity, and healthier living.

WHY DOES IT MATTER NOW?

The data clearly shows that humans are not only using technology more, but we are asking it to step into roles that used to belong to people without fully recognising or appreciating its social consequences.

Turning to machines for comfort and connection is more than an efficiency play, and there is a real risk that this shift becomes self-reinforcing.

The more we normalise AI as a substitute for human interaction, the less incentive we have to invest in rebuilding human systems of care, of investing in our families, teams and communities.

The erosion of human connection is not happening in isolation. It is unfolding against a backdrop of deepening global anxiety, from geopolitical tensions and wars to climate crises and economic instability. Symbols like the Doomsday Clock, now just seconds from midnight, reflect not only existential threats but also our collective sense of unease.

In such an environment, it is tempting to retreat into the efficiency and predictability of machines. But when artificial intelligence begins to fill the void left by fractured relationships and fatigued institutions, it risks becoming a crutch rather than a catalyst, enabling us to bypass the hard, human work of listening, empathising and rebuilding trust. The more turbulent the world becomes, the more vital – not expendable – authentic human connection becomes.

Technology can and should play a role in supporting goals, facilitating communication, easing daily pressures, and navigating challenges with seemingly no solution.

But it cannot replace the emotional intelligence, empathy and accountability that come from forging human relationships and connections. These are not 'soft' attributes; they are the very foundations of healthy societies and resilient economies.

Leaders in government, business and civil society must carefully balance the need to create spaces in our organisations where innovation and technology are embedded, but inherently human, real conversation and connections are prioritised.

The most valuable outcomes of Gen AI won't come from what it supercedes, but from how it empowers people to do more, feel more, and relate more to one another.

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› Adam Craker is the CEO of iqbusiness, South Africa

O IMPACTO EMOCIONAL DA IA: ESTAMOS A PERDER A CONEXÃO HUMANA?

Existem inúmeros casos de uso práticos e benéficos para a IA em diversas áreas. No entanto, o uso predominante parece ser o de apoio pessoal e emocional. O que isso significa para o futuro da tecnologia? **Adam Craker** investiga.

A IA generativa está bem integrada ao cotidiano de milhões de pessoas, mas uma mudança está em curso e merece uma análise mais aprofundada. Em 2023, a maioria das conversas se concentrou em como a IA de última geração transformaria a produtividade. Simplificar tarefas, automatizar fluxos de trabalho e acelerar a inovação eram a nossa especialidade. Mas, em 2025, os dados contam uma história diferente: o uso mais comum da IA de primeira geração agora é o suporte pessoal e emocional.

Isso pode parecer um progresso. A tecnologia está a entrar em cena para ajudar as pessoas a lidar com a solidão, a ansiedade e as pressões da vida moderna. Mas há uma questão mais profunda que vale a pena perguntar: por que existe uma necessidade tão generalizada de apoio emocional?

A IA ENTRA EM ACÇÃO ONDE A CONEXÃO HUMANA FALHA.

Os confinamentos da Covid-19 deixaram um legado que vai além da economia e da saúde. Aqueles meses sísmicos mudaram fundamentalmente a forma como interagimos, trabalhamos e conectamos-nos uns com os outros. As normas estabelecidas durante os confinamentos persistiram e, em muitos casos, foram reforçadas. As comunidades físicas se tornaram menos numerosas e a interacção social tem migrado cada vez mais para o ambiente online. Esses comportamentos temporários, destinados a nos manter seguros, contribuíram para um novo tipo de isolamento, mais permanente.

Agora, em vez de reconstruir a conexão humana, as máquinas estão a tornar-se nossas companheiras e confidentes. Este é um ponto de virada, e não é um ponto de virada positivo.

Na iqbusiness, vimos em primeira mão como a IA de última geração pode capacitar equipas e impulsionar ganhos operacionais. Essas são aplicações tangíveis e valiosas das quais nenhuma empresa moderna pode prescindir. Mas os líderes não podem ignorar a tendência paralela que se desenrola diante de nós: A inteligência artificial de nova geração está a entrar em cena onde a conexão humana está a falhar, e é isso que precisa de ser corrigido.

OS SEIS PRINCIPAIS USOS DA IA DE GERAÇÃO

Numa análise recente dos casos de uso da IA de última geração na Harvard Business Review, Marc Zao-Sanders revelou que os 10 usos mais difundidos apresentaram uma mudança significativa entre 2024 e 2025. Em 2024, 'Geração de ideias' era a opção número um (agora caiu para a sexta

CRÉDITO: MICROSOFT COPILOT; ADOBE FIREFLY; IQBUSINESS

posição), mas foi substituída por 'Terapia/acompanhamento' (que subiu da segunda posição em 2024).

1. Terapia/acompanhamento
Ferramentas baseadas em inteligência artificial estão a ajudar as pessoas a lidar com o stresse, a depressão e a regular as suas emoções. Mas esse aumento sinaliza algo mais: uma profunda carência de relações humanas. Líderes empresariais, governamentais, escolares, religiosos e comunitários precisam de levar este momento a sério e não perder de vista o que – e quem – está em jogo na revolução digital.

2. Organizando a minha vida (iniciante)
Muitas pessoas estão a usar ferramentas de IA de última geração para acompanhar, motivar e organizar suas metas ou tarefas, a fim de aumentar a eficiência e a responsabilização. Mas, na prática, isso geralmente resulta em menos oportunidades de colaboração e momentos para assistência e conhecimento profissional.

3. Encontrando um propósito (novo participante)
Os seres humanos buscam um propósito desde tempos imemoriais, e a IA de primeira geração não mudou isso. Os sábios dariam ouvidos às palavras do sobrevivente do Holocausto Viktor Frankl: "Tudo pode ser tirado de um homem, menos uma coisa: a última das liberdades humanas – escolher a própria atitude em qualquer circunstância, escolher o próprio caminho." Estamos a escolher o nosso próprio caminho ou a permitir que a tecnologia faça as escolhas por nós?

4. Aprendizagem aprimorada
Tutores de IA e plataformas de aprendizagem adaptativa tornam a educação e a aprendizagem mais pessoais e acessíveis para quem está online. Mas, sem mentores ou envolvimento da comunidade, grande parte da aprendizagem carece de contexto e experiência prática, e muitas habilidades interpessoais essenciais para o crescimento e o sucesso se perdem.

5. Geração de código para profissionais
A IA de geração de código é amplamente utilizada por designers e equipas de produto para impulsionar a geração de ideias, e os desenvolvedores contam com assistentes de IA para escrever e depurar código.

É aqui que a IA de primeira geração pode ter um valor imenso e sustentável. É eficiente, mas à medida que a dependência aumenta, as habilidades profundas podem diminuir, pois priorizamos a velocidade em detrimento da exploração e a novidade em detrimento da autenticidade.

6. Geração de ideias
Passamos rapidamente da desconfiança que tínhamos em relação à IA de primeira geração, há apenas dois anos, para o seu uso cotidiano em praticamente todos os contextos pessoais e profissionais. O seu uso para gerar ideias caiu de um para seis este ano, à medida que foi superado por usos mais alarmantes.

Outros usos que figuram no top 10 de 2025 incluem diversão e nonsense, aprimoramento de código para profissionais, criatividade e uma vida mais saudável.

POR QUE ISSO IMPORTA AGORA?

Os dados mostram claramente que os humanos não apenas estão a usar mais a tecnologia, mas também estão a pedir a ela que assuma funções que antes pertenciam às pessoas, sem reconhecer ou valorizar totalmente as consequências sociais disso.

Recorrer a máquinas em busca de conforto e conexão é mais do que uma simples medida de eficiência, e existe um risco real de que essa mudança se torne um ciclo vicioso.

Quanto mais normalizamos a IA como substituta da interacção humana, menos incentivo temos para investir na reconstrução de sistemas humanos de cuidado, para investir em nossas famílias, equipas e comunidades.

A erosão das conexões humanas não está a acontecer de forma isolada. Isso ocorre num contexto de crescente ansiedade global, desde tensões geopolíticas e guerras até crises climáticas e instabilidade económica. Símbolos como o Relógio do Juízo Final, a poucos segundos da meia-noite, reflectem não apenas ameaças existenciais, mas também nossa sensação colectiva de inquietação..

Num ambiente assim, é tentador refugiar-se na eficiência e previsibilidade das máquinas. Mas quando a inteligência artificial começa a preencher o vazio deixado por relacionamentos fragmentados e instituições desgastadas, ela corre o risco de se tornar uma muleta em vez de um catalisador, permitindo-nos contornar o árduo trabalho humano de ouvir, ter empatia e reconstruir a confiança. Quanto mais turbulento o mundo se torna, mais vital, e não dispensável, se torna a conexão humana autêntica.

A tecnologia pode e deve desempenhar um papel importante no apoio a objectivos, na facilitação da comunicação, no alívio das pressões diárias e na resolução de desafios aparentemente insolúveis.

Mas isso não pode substituir a inteligência emocional, a empatia e a responsabilização que advêm da construção de relações e conexões humanas. Esses não são atributos "secundários"; são os próprios alicerces de sociedades saudáveis e economias resilientes.

Líderes governamentais, empresariais e da sociedade civil devem equilibrar cuidadosamente a necessidade de criar espaços em nossas organizações onde a inovação e a tecnologia estejam integradas, mas onde o que é inerentemente humano, a conversa e as conexões genuínas sejam priorizadas.

Os resultados mais valiosos da IA de última geração não virão do que ela substituirá, mas sim de como ela capacitará as pessoas a fazerem mais, sentirem mais e se relacionarem mais umas com as outras. ●

› Adam Craker é o CEO da iqbusiness, África do Sul

HOW DATA ANALYTICS AND A.I. ARE TRANSFORMING DIGITAL MARKETING

Jacqui Muller offers a practitioner's perspective on leveraging data analytics and AI to drive decision-making in digital marketing.

Marketers today depend heavily on data analytics and AI to steer their strategies and decisions. This is particularly true of digital marketing, which makes use of AI-powered insights and extensive data tracking across various channels to evaluate every customer interaction.

This method moves marketing teams away from relying solely on instinct, enabling them to use actual customer behaviour and campaign data to craft more effective approaches. Consequently, marketing strategies have become more flexible and well-informed, leading to better results based on real-time feedback.

DATA ANALYTICS: THE FOUNDATION OF DATA-DRIVEN MARKETING

Data analytics is central to data-driven marketing as it gathers information from various sources such as websites, social media platforms and email campaigns.

This comprehensive data provides a full picture of the customer journey. Advanced analytical tools help reveal important trends, such as which adverts generate the most engagement or where customers tend to drop out in the sales journey.

By employing descriptive, predictive and prescriptive analytics models, marketers turn past interactions and campaign data into practical strategies. For instance, diagnostic analytics can explain sudden shifts in customer behaviour or traffic, helping teams respond accordingly.

Personalising campaigns with these insights results in better customer experiences, increased efficiency and stronger returns, with many marketers acknowledging that personalised marketing drives higher profits.

AI: AUGMENTING INSIGHT AND AUTOMATION IN MARKETING

AI enhances this process by speeding up and deepening analysis, allowing marketers to monitor many channels efficiently, understand customer behaviours and optimise engagement instantly.

Machine learning algorithms can sift through vast and complex datasets, including unstructured data such as images and social media posts, to detect patterns and anomalies that humans might miss. This capability enables marketers to anticipate trends and consumer behaviour rather than merely react. AI-driven predictive models identify the best channels and customer segments, enabling proactive strategy adjustments.

Additionally, AI automates routine tasks like optimising bid prices in programmatic advertising and generating

PHOTOS: CANVA

content drafts, freeing marketers to focus on creative strategy.

Personalisation at scale is one of AI's key benefits. Algorithms continuously analyse individual customer data to deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time.

Industries ranging from retail to entertainment use AI recommendation systems – for example, streaming services suggest content based on viewing history. Similarly, AI-driven segmentation allows for highly targeted campaigns tailored to individual profiles and behaviours, boosting engagement and customer loyalty by making marketing feel relevant and timely.

Key areas where AI and analytics impact marketing include:

- Predictive insights: Machine learning forecasts customer behaviour and campaign outcomes, helping marketers allocate budgets and plan product launches or promotions effectively.
- Real-time optimisation: AI tracks campaigns across channels, identifying underperforming ads and emerging trends, allowing marketers to swiftly adjust content and spend.
- Enhanced segmentation: AI finds subtle customer preferences, enabling marketers to create highly personalised experiences that improve conversion and retention.
- Automation and efficiency: From AI-powered chatbots handling customer queries around the clock to tools that automatically generate reports and social media calendars, automation reduces manual workload, boosts productivity and ensures decisions are based on current data.

STRATEGIC IMPACT AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The fusion of data analytics and AI offers a powerful competitive edge across industries. Marketing teams using advanced analytics platforms can extract deeper insights and incorporate them smoothly into campaign planning.

AI embedded in marketing software enables even smaller businesses to harness sophisticated intelligence.

Collaboration between IT professionals and marketers ensures data is integrated, secure and converted into business value.

However, adopting these technologies comes with responsibilities. Data ethics and privacy must guide strategies. Companies should use customer data transparently and comply with regulations to build trust.

In addition, AI models require ongoing monitoring to avoid bias and to align with brand values. When carefully applied, data and AI empower marketers to make decisions with remarkable precision and confidence.

TO SUMMARISE

In summary, data analytics and AI are transforming digital marketing by turning vast amounts of data into strategic guidance. Marketers can quickly adjust campaigns in real time or plan future initiatives informed by predictive insights.

The prevailing mindset is 'show me the data', as data-driven marketing not only optimises performance but also uncovers new growth opportunities. By blending technical skills with strategic thinking, marketers have made data their most valuable asset for making impactful decisions. ●

Jacqui Muller operates at the intersection of business, technology and education – driving intelligent automation, strategic innovation and industry-aligned skills development. As a UiPath MVP, business owner, consultant, solution architect and researcher, she empowers people and organisations to thrive in a digital economy.

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO USING A.I. TO CREATE A BUSINESS

Every successful AI-driven business begins by solving a real, tangible problem. But it's important to move fast, advises **Jacqui Muller**.

AI is changing how entrepreneurs start and grow new ventures. Using AI effectively can quickly turn a simple idea into a viable business, but success depends on having a solid foundation and clear strategy.

This guide outlines a straightforward approach – from finding the right problem to using the latest tools.

IDENTIFY AND SOLVE A REAL-WORLD PROBLEM

Every successful AI-driven business begins by solving a real, tangible problem. Rather than innovating just for the sake of it, find a genuine issue that you or your community face.

Ensuring your AI solution fits the problem closely is essential. This clear focus steers development and makes it easier to explain the value to investors and customers.

KICK OFF YOUR CITIZEN-DEVELOPER JOURNEY

You don't need to be an expert coder to build with AI. Adopt the citizen developer mindset – modern platforms enable almost anyone to create applications with minimal coding.

AI services like OpenAI's GPT-5 offer straightforward APIs, allowing you to add powerful functions without starting from zero. You can also use no-code or low-code tools to quickly build a prototype. Early hands-on experimentation helps you learn fast and validate your idea.

CONNECT THROUGH ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Building an AI business isn't something you should do alone. Learning from communities is extremely valuable – join tech forums, meetups and online groups where you can share knowledge and get support.

These communities introduce you to new techniques and help solve challenges quicker. Take advantage of free training from places like UiPath Academy and Microsoft Learn to boost your AI and automation skills. Learning from others, and sharing your experiences, helps you avoid mistakes and stay motivated.

LEVERAGE AVAILABLE A.I. TOOLS AND PLATFORMS

There are many AI tools and platforms available that can speed up your development and marketing efforts. Some examples include:

- OpenAI: Offers pre-trained models like ChatGPT for tasks such as content creation or ideation.
- Meta AI: An open-source large-language model free for commercial use, lowering the barrier to custom AI and animation solutions.
- Canva: An AI-enhanced design platform that produces professional-quality marketing visuals. Its Magic Studio can create polished designs from text prompts, making content creation faster.
- Replit: An online coding environment with AI-assisted programming that lets non-developers transform ideas into working apps within hours.

MOVE QUICKLY FROM IDEATION TO EXECUTION

Large language model (LLM) technologies can support your business at every stage, from idea generation to execution.

In the brainstorming phase, AI acts as a creative partner – for instance, GPT-5 can quickly offer ideas, outlines or product names, helping you get started.

During execution, these models speed up content creation and coding. AI tools like Replit's Ghostwriter or GitHub's Copilot can draft marketing material or code, which you then polish. This rapid prototyping and launching lets you move fast.

The key is to iterate quickly: develop a minimum viable product (MVP), collect user feedback, then refine your solution repeatedly to find the best fit. ●

PHOTOS: CANVA

EXAMINING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF A.I. ACROSS THE CONTINENT

Artificial Intelligence in Africa is set to top US$16.5-billion by 2030: A recent white paper explores the path towards continued digital transformation.

A pan-African study of the continent's way forward for responsible AI adoption, titled '*Harnessing the Transformative Power of AI in Africa*', has been released by global payment technology company Mastercard.

The white paper explores how AI – if deployed responsibly and inclusively – can unlock transformative outcomes across the continent's major industries. These include agriculture, healthcare, education, energy and finance.

With Africa's AI market projected to grow from US$4.5-billion in 2025 to US$16.5-billion by 2030 according to a recent report from Statista, the paper presents a case for multi-stakeholder collaboration and investment. It emphasises how Africa's unique demographics, mobile-first infrastructure and entrepreneurial spirit position it as an active architect of the future.

"Africa's engagement with AI is already reshaping lives – not just in labs, but in farms, clinics and classrooms," comments Mark Elliott, Division President for Africa at Mastercard. "We believe responsible, locally rooted AI can drive inclusive growth and connect more people to opportunity."

Several country specific highlights are detailed by the research team.

KENYAN A.I. INNOVATION

An emerging leader in AI innovation, Kenya has leveraged its 'Silicon Savannah' status to securely deploy AI across sectors. Platforms like Tala use mobile data for credit scoring, while Jacaranda Health's UlizaLlama, an AI-powered chatbot, provides maternal health support in five local languages.

The newly launched *National AI Strategy* (2025–2030) outlines the government's commitment to positioning Kenya as a regional leader in AI research and development, innovation and commercialisation. This is seen as a way to drive national socio-economic development.

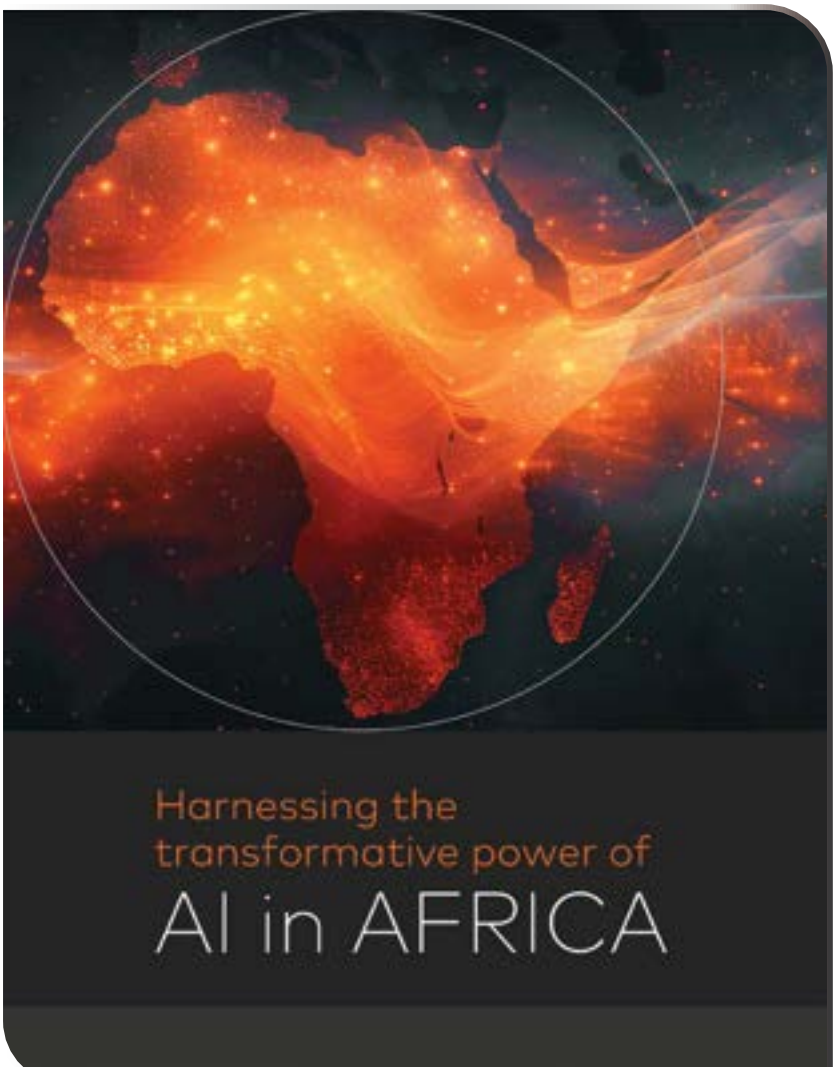


PHOTO: MASTERCARD

NIGERIA'S MANY STARTUPS

Nigeria ranks second in the number of AI startups in Africa and secured $218-million in venture capital investment in 2023.

As one of Africa's most dynamic AI ecosystems, Nigeria is using AI to personalise learning (through private education company Rising Academies), deliver microfinance via *Kudi.ai*, and strengthen governance with AI tools that monitor public fund allocation.

With a $1.4-billion projected AI market size by 2025, the government's proactive approach, combined with growing private-sector innovation, suggests promising growth in AI applications.

MOROCCO ADVANCES ITS ADOPTION OF A.I.

An emerging AI hub in North Africa, Morocco is advancing AI adoption across healthcare, energy, agriculture and finance.

Institutions such as Mohammed VI Polytechnic University and DeepEcho are driving local innovation, while the MoroccoAI annual conference is shaping national dialogue on the future of AI.

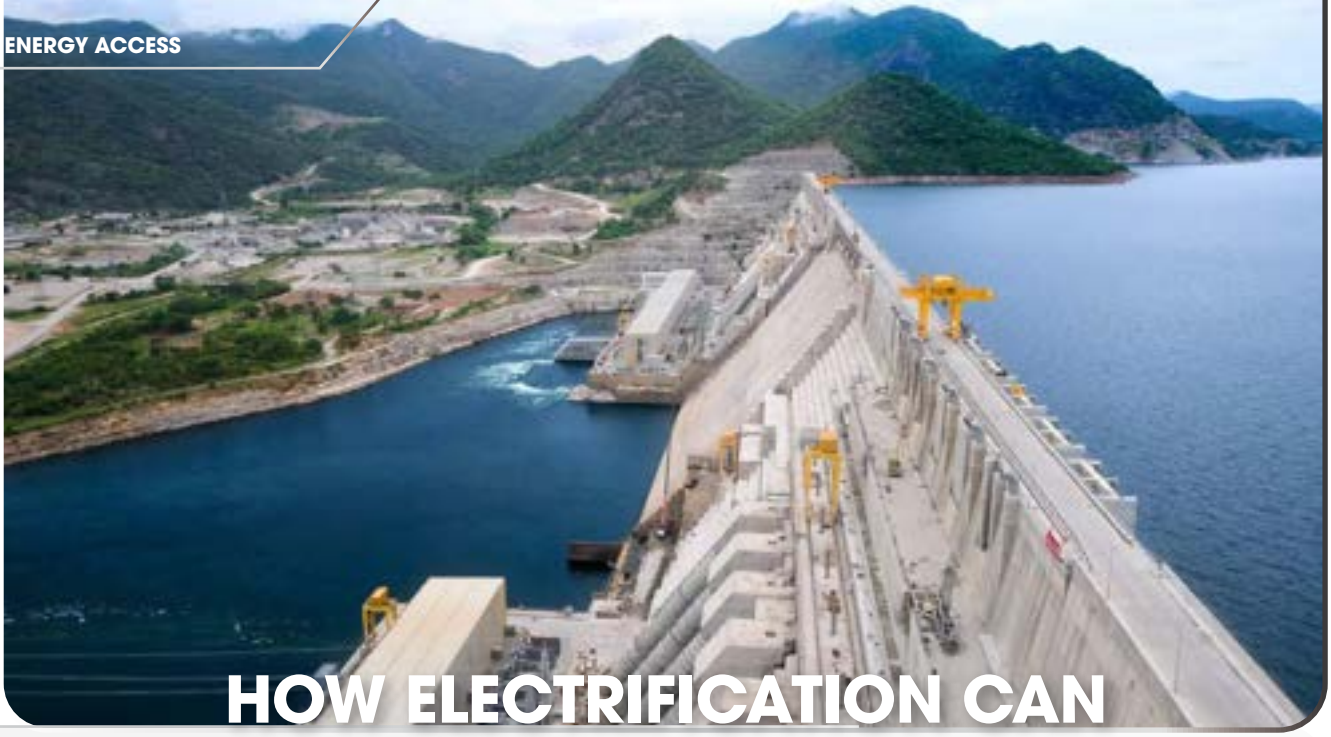
Under its *Digital 2030* strategy, Morocco aims to attract $1.1-billion in investment and create 240,000 digital jobs by 2030.

A.I. CAN ACCELERATE FINANCIAL INCLUSION

"Harnessing the potential of AI in Africa will be instrumental in accelerating financial inclusion and driving the continent's digital and economic growth," the white paper concludes.

"Strategic collaborations between governments, fintechs and global partners will be key to unlocking AI's full impact."

Readers of our Digital Edition can download the white paper here. ●



HOW ELECTRIFICATION CAN BE SUPPORTED BY SOLAR TECHNOLOGY IN ETHIOPIA

Solomon Tedla analyses how the new Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project can drive universal electrification and energy access in the country.

GERD already stands as one of Ethiopia's proudest national accomplishments. Financed largely from domestic resources, it has proven the country's ability to unite around an ambitious vision and deliver a project of continental scale.

FINANCING GRID EXPANSION

Electrifying a country of more than 120-million people, spread across often sparsely populated regions, is a complex developmental challenge. Extending high-voltage transmission lines requires huge upfront investment, years of construction, and sustained financing. Despite these difficulties, Ethiopia has made major progress: millions more households are now connected to electricity compared to a decade ago.

A FINANCING ENGINE

This is where GERD opens a new path. With projected annual export earnings of about $600-million the dam provides Ethiopia with a reliable hard-currency stream. If even one-third of these revenues – about US$200-million per year – were dedicated to a National Electrification Fund, the country could unlock $2-billion over the next decade.

That amount would be enough to finance solar access for as many as 7- to 10-million households. Considering that roughly 10-million Ethiopian households remain unelectrified, this is an opportunity to close most of the access gap within a single decade.

A SELF-FINANCING MODEL

The economics work in Ethiopia's favour. We estimate the average solar equivalent cost per household may average about $300, creating a total market opportunity of nearly $3-billion.

Families already spend heavily on kerosene, diesel, and disposable batteries – often more than the cost of solar products loan repayments. By redirecting these expenditures toward clean energy systems, households can usually achieve a fast payback in less than two years. As loans are repaid, the fund replenishes itself, creating a sustainable, revolving financing model without burdening the national budget.

POWERING INDUSTRY ALONGSIDE HOUSEHOLDS

The impact extends well beyond household electrification. By linking the fund to local manufacturers, Ethiopia can scale up domestic production of solar lanterns, home systems and generators. Companies already operating in Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa demonstrate that the technical capacity exists. With stable, large-scale demand, these firms could expand, create jobs, and reduce imports – while positioning Ethiopia to supply neighboring East African markets with affordable energy products.

A NATIONWIDE TRANSFORMATION

GERD has already given Ethiopia much to be proud of. But its true potential lies in what comes next: transforming export revenues into universal electrification and industrial strength. By combining ambitious grid expansion with an innovative financing mechanism for solar, Ethiopia can ensure that every household gains access to modern power.

In this way, GERD becomes the engine of a virtuous cycle – financing universal energy access, supporting domestic industry, and laying the foundation for inclusive growth. Ethiopia has achieved a milestone in building the dam; the next leap is to harness its revenues to power every home and every factory in the nation. ●

Solomon Tedla is CEO of Abramba Technologies in Bahir Dar, a member of the ICT Association Ethiopia (ICT-ET).

This article has been edited due to space requirements

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