



International
Labour
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 **DECENT JOBS
FOR YOUTH**

**BOOSTING
DECENT JOBS AND
ENHANCING SKILLS
FOR YOUTH IN
KENYA'S DIGITAL
ECONOMY**





“Any effort to give communities a tool they can use to speak up for their own rights is important.”

Nanjala Nyabola is passionate about digital rights and technology. That’s why she founded the [Kiswahili Digital Rights Project](#), a company that translates (and popularizes!) tech terminology into Africa’s most-spoken language: Kiswahili.

“English has a huge linguistic advantage in the digital age, and non-English first communities are basically playing catch up. Any effort to give communities a tool they can use to speak up for their own rights is important.”

Academics from different universities across east Africa consider the histories and linguistic contexts of words before translating them. The translations are available for download, for free, in the form of vocabulary flashcards that could also be used as playing cards.

She also helped launch a literature prize to encourage people to continue to use Kiswahili and imagine different digital futures for the language community. The competition received almost 300 submissions.

Her story serves as inspiration for the continent, as Africa’s youth population continues to grow and as many countries undergo digital transformation.



The programme

Many young Africans face barriers to accessing decent work, which the COVID-19 pandemic has only made worse. At the same time, **the digital transformation of Africa has potential to create new jobs in the digital economy and to build back better.**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) - in support of the African Union (AU) and under the umbrella of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth - are implementing a programme to create decent employment and enhance skills for youth in Africa's digital economy.

The project

Name: Boosting decent jobs and enhancing skills for youth in Kenya's digital economy

Location: Nationwide, starting in Garissa, Isiolo, Kirinyaga, Laikipia, Makueni, Nandi, Siaya, Taita Taveta, Turkana and Vihiga counties

Duration: 2021–2025

Implementing partners: ILO and ITU, with the support of the PROSPECTS initiative in Garissa and Turkana counties

Contact: jdey@ilo.org and itu-ro-africa@itu.int

Fast facts



Youth population

13.6 million

aged 15 to 29 (2019)



Share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET):

19.7%

15% men | 24.3% women
aged 15 to 24 (2019)



ICT sector share of GDP:

2%

(2020)



Internet usage

23%

of the population using the internet (2019)

47

active mobile internet subscriptions per 100 inhabitants (2020)

Youth employment challenges and opportunities

Kenya's population is young: 29 per cent of the country's 47.6 million inhabitants are aged between 15 and 29. More than two-thirds of young people are unemployed or find themselves in working poverty, with many working informally. Economic growth has not resulted in sufficient decent job creation and young people's skills often do not match the jobs that are available.

Kenya has one of the fastest growing digital economies in the world. **In fact, it is positioned to become a top destination for business process outsourcing in Africa.** The country's ICT sector has grown steadily, bolstering a new generation of digital entrepreneurs.

With access to digital skills, markets, networks, finance, information and representation, youth in Kenya can both benefit from and contribute to their country's digital transformation and development.

Our goal

The goal of the project is to enable more young people in Kenya to access decent jobs in the digital economy.

We aim to strengthen institutional capacity to design and deliver policies and services to boost decent jobs and enhance digital skills for youth. The project directly benefits young people aged 18 to 29 who have completed secondary school, with a special focus on youth from rural communities.

Our approach

We will achieve our goal through an iterative cycle of:

- Interventions to promote employment opportunities, digital skills and employment services
- Providing policy advice using new diagnostic tools and data
- Establishing partnerships and networks

KEY ELEMENTS INCLUDE:

- **Part 1:** Promote job and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth

We link young people to jobs, internships and work-based learning opportunities in the digital economy through a "My First Digital Job" scheme that leverages existing job matching services, like Ajira Digital. We partner with employers, enterprises, workers' organisations and tech hubs to improve entrepreneurship support and business development services, making them fit for purpose for the digital era. By investing in digital infrastructure development, we will improve connectivity at the county level and accelerate localised digital transformation – all while creating decent employment opportunities for young people.

- **Part 2:** Transform digital skills curricula and training, equipping young people with market-oriented digital skills

We update digital skills curricula and competency standards, making them more responsive to skills needs in the digital economy. We support education and training providers to reach more young people by digitalizing training services and building staff capacity. In partnership with local technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, we deliver inclusive digital skills training that is suitable for different skill levels.

- **Part 3:** Modernize employment services, improving outcomes for young jobseekers and employers

We help public and private employment services provide up-to-date labour market information and connect youth to job opportunities by training staff and introducing new digital tools and systems. The career and vocational guidance offered in schools will also be improved to include a focus on job opportunities in the digital economy.

- **Part 4:** Provide policy advice using new diagnostic tools and data showing what best boosts youth employment

We assess current digital skills availability and needs as well as job creation opportunities in Kenya's digital economy. We also analyse the capacity of education and training providers to go digital. These data will support the provision of evidence-based policy advice. The knowledge gained through the project will be shared nationally and regionally with other countries participating in the programme, as well as through the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and youth-led organizations and networks like SDG youth networks and Generation Connect Africa Youth Groups.

- **Part 5:** Establish partnerships and networks

Working closely with policymakers and youth employment practitioners, we support the development of pro-employment digital economy policies. A national campaign will show how decent jobs in the digital economy can be promoted, highlighting the rights and responsibilities of young workers. It will also provide young people with information about skills development, career guidance and job placement opportunities.

Actions and achievements

In 2020, following a series of consultations and workshops with representatives from the federal government, workers' and employers' organizations, academia, development partners and youth-led organisations, we validated the project plan.

2021 marked the start of the project with a pilot implementation period in the counties of Garissa and Turkana.

Several actions are planned or underway:

- **Digital skills supply and demand analysis**, including an assessment of TVET preparedness for digital transformation
- **Design of the "My First Digital Job" scheme**, which will connect young people to employers in the digital space for learning and work opportunities
- **Review and development of digital skills training curricula** in collaboration with TVET institutions, employers, training experts and government agencies
- **Development of a youth-to-youth career coaching service** for young refugees and youth in host communities in the form of "Digital Job Search Clubs"
- **A national stakeholders meeting** to continue the engagement of key stakeholders in the implementation of the project and explore how interested development partners can join.

Spotlight on action: project pilot in Garissa and Turkana counties in collaboration under PROSPECTS

We are linking up with UNHCR and others through the Partnership for improving prospects for host communities and forcibly displaced persons (PROSPECTS) to kick-start the implementation of the project in Garissa and Turkana counties.

Garissa, which borders Somalia, and Turkana, which borders Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia, host the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Kenya. In these remote counties, young refugees and youth from host communities have little access to quality education, skills development, and decent job opportunities.

In 2021, we launched a set of complementary interventions focused on job creation, skills development and employment services for these young people, underpinned by a digital skills supply and demand analysis.

This analysis uses a new approach based on ILO's skills anticipation methodology and ITU's [Digital Skills Assessment Guidebook](#). It will provide a thorough understanding of the employment potential of the local digital economy, what skills young people need to secure work, and how TVET institutions can improve their digital skills training, including through the adoption of digital technologies.

Based on the assessment, we will:

- **Design the "My First Digital Job" scheme** in close collaboration with employers active in the digital space, who will engage youth in work-based learning and work opportunities.
- **Initiate a curriculum review development process** to ensure the digital skills training offered by TVET institutions prepares young people for jobs in the digital economy.
- **Develop a model for establishing youth-led "Digital Job Search Clubs"**, which will create support groups that enable successful job hunting in the digital economy.

The pilot activities in Garissa and Turkana will lay the groundwork to scale up our interventions to other counties, using the new models and tools we are designing and testing. These activities are also the basis to further strengthen partnerships for the project in Kenya, including through PROSPECTS.

Support our work

Are you ready to invest in decent jobs and digital skills for youth in Kenya?

We are looking for partners who can:

- Provide **financial and technical support** to implement and scale up project interventions
- Engage public and private stakeholders to **establish new partnerships** and attract additional investments

If you are interested in supporting our work, email us at jdey@ilo.org or itu-ro-africa@itu.int