

# BOOSTING DECENT JOBS AND ENHANCING SKILLS FOR YOUTH IN AFRICA'S DIGITAL ECONOMY

## THE CHALLENGE

Africa is home to nearly 363 million young people and this is projected to double by 2050. As yet, the full potential of young Africans remains unrealized: unemployment, working poverty, informal employment and gender inequalities continue to be significant obstacles to young people accessing decent jobs.

At the same time, the digital technologies transforming societies and labour markets have the potential to create jobs in a new digital economy. For Africa's transition to a digital economy to become an opportunity for jobs-rich growth will require a skilled workforce, efficient labour market facilitation and an enabling business environment. However, most of the continent's young people currently lack those skills most in demand in the digital economy and are unable to access suitable training opportunities or job matching services. Meanwhile, job creation in the private sector is insufficient and decent entrepreneurial opportunities hard to find.

## COVID-19



Beyond its immediate health impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic is having severe socioeconomic consequences for Africa. According to ILO estimates, the equivalent of over 50 million full-time jobs were lost on the continent in the first half of 2020. The impacts of the pandemic on young people are systematic, deep and disproportionate. They face disruptions to learning and training, employment and income losses, and greater difficulty in finding good quality jobs. The pandemic has, however, demonstrated how important digital technology is in responding to crises and how it can help to build back better.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Young people are the world's most important source of human capital and key to achieving Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Equipped with enhanced digital skills, access to markets, networks, finance, information, voice and representation, young Africans can both benefit from and contribute to their countries' digital transformation and long-term development.

Under the aegis of the Global Initiative on [Decent Jobs for Youth](#), the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO)

and the [International Telecommunication Union](#) (ITU), with the support of the [African Union](#) (AU), have together initiated a programme with continental reach to create decent employment and enhance skills for youth in Africa's digital economy. The aim of the programme is to empower Africa's youth and ensure they benefit from the new opportunities in the digital economy, and that their energy and creativity is directed to the advantage of expanding, digitally-enabled industries.

## THE PROGRAMME

The programme's approach is comprehensive, targeted and evidence-driven, and based on the principles of inclusion, participation and respect for human rights. Its framework was developed through consultation with young people, governments, educators and digital economy partners in the public and private sectors.

## THE GOAL

The overarching goal is to increase the number of young Africans in target countries able to access decent work in the digital economy. The programme will operate through an iterative cycle of implementing interventions to create jobs, strengthen digital skills and improve employment services; establishing partnerships and networks, and providing policy advice using new diagnostic tools and data showing what best boosts youth employment. Under the umbrella of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, the programme will operate at continent level to establish between country partnerships and facilitate learning from each participating country's own plans for youth employment and digital skills development.

## EVIDENCE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WORKS

New evidence about the challenges, opportunities and best practices for skills development and youth employment in Africa's digital economy is to be generated through improved diagnostic tools and data collection. Youth employment stakeholders will be invited to participate in national, regional and continental fora to disseminate lessons learned, share knowledge and discuss opportunities to boost youth skills development and employment.

## COLLABORATION TO SUSTAIN AND SCALE UP RESULTS

The programme will establish networks, innovate and foster collaboration among key stakeholders to create an enabling policy environment for sustainable digital transformation. It will seek out and capitalize on synergies with already existing initiatives at the country and regional level. Campaigns to promote and protect the rights and responsibilities of young people working in the digital economy will be launched, seeking also to incentivize young women and other vulnerable or marginalized youth to participate in digital skills development activities.

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

### Labour demand – job creation and entrepreneurship opportunities in the digital economy:

Boosting labour demand depends upon the presence of an enabling business climate where firms and young entrepreneurs can thrive, a crucial requirement put at jeopardy by COVID-19. The programme will promote pro-employment policies and collaborate with governments, workers and employers in the implementation of "first digital jobs" interventions, linking young entrepreneurs to value chains in urban and rural settings, strengthening job quality in the informal economy and facilitating the transition of youth into the formal economy.

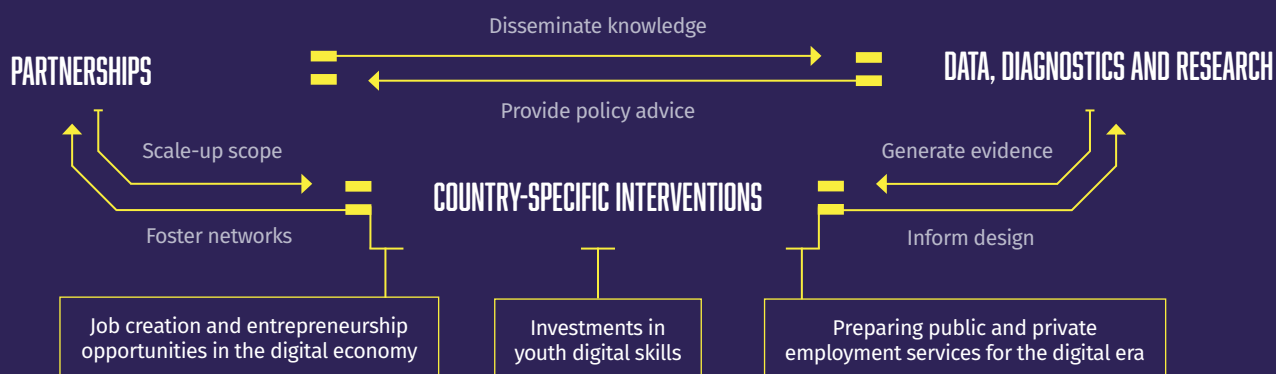
### Labour supply – investments in youth digital skills:

A labour force equipped for not only today's but tomorrow's labour market is a win-win for governments, social partners, private sector, industry and youth. The programme will support governments to develop policies that strengthen the supply of demand-driven skills in the digital economy. In addition, the programme will improve the quality and focus of skills development interventions in terms of curricula development, teaching and training settings. It will also design and deliver digital skills development interventions that target different youth groups with through partnerships.

### Labour intermediation – preparing public and private employment services for the digital era:

The programme will address the skills mismatches and information asymmetries that exist in many countries. A key focus be enabling employment services to adapt to and pilot new technologies and digital platforms, to understand what the changing needs are for specific skills and identify opportunities for youth in the digital economy.

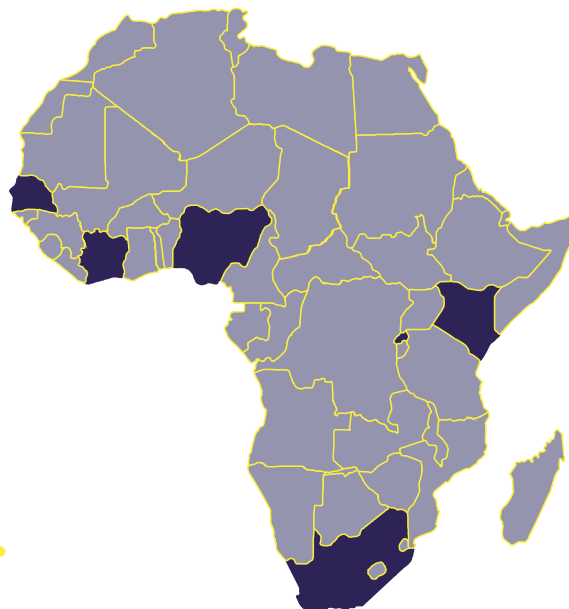
**Increase the number of young Africans in target countries able to access decent work in the digital economy, through an iterative cycle of programme implementation, partnership development and understanding what works**



## THE COUNTRIES

The selection of programme partner countries is based on a demonstrable political will to advance decent jobs for youth, the availability of labour market information on the digital economy and of innovation funds, as well as regional representation by the partnering organizations.

The initial focus countries are **Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa**.



## JOIN US AS A PARTNER

The ILO, ITU and AU look forward to welcoming other stakeholders in supporting the implementation of this joint programme, including governments, social partners, youth and civil society organizations, the United Nations system and other multilateral and regional organizations, private sector entities, foundations and academia.

The programme requires a budget of **USD 30 million** for an **initial five-year implementation period**. We are seeking to establish long-lasting partnerships to mobilize resources for programme implementation at the continent and country levels. Two concrete ways of supporting the implementation of the joint programme are by providing:

- **financial and/or technical support** for the implementation of innovative and tailored interventions in the selected countries in order to boost job creation, strengthen skills and facilitate labour intermediation in the digital economy;
- **convening and brokering support** in mobilizing public and private partners to establish shared-value partnerships and networks able to attract additional investments to boost decent jobs and skills for youth in the digital economy and strengthen youth engagement.

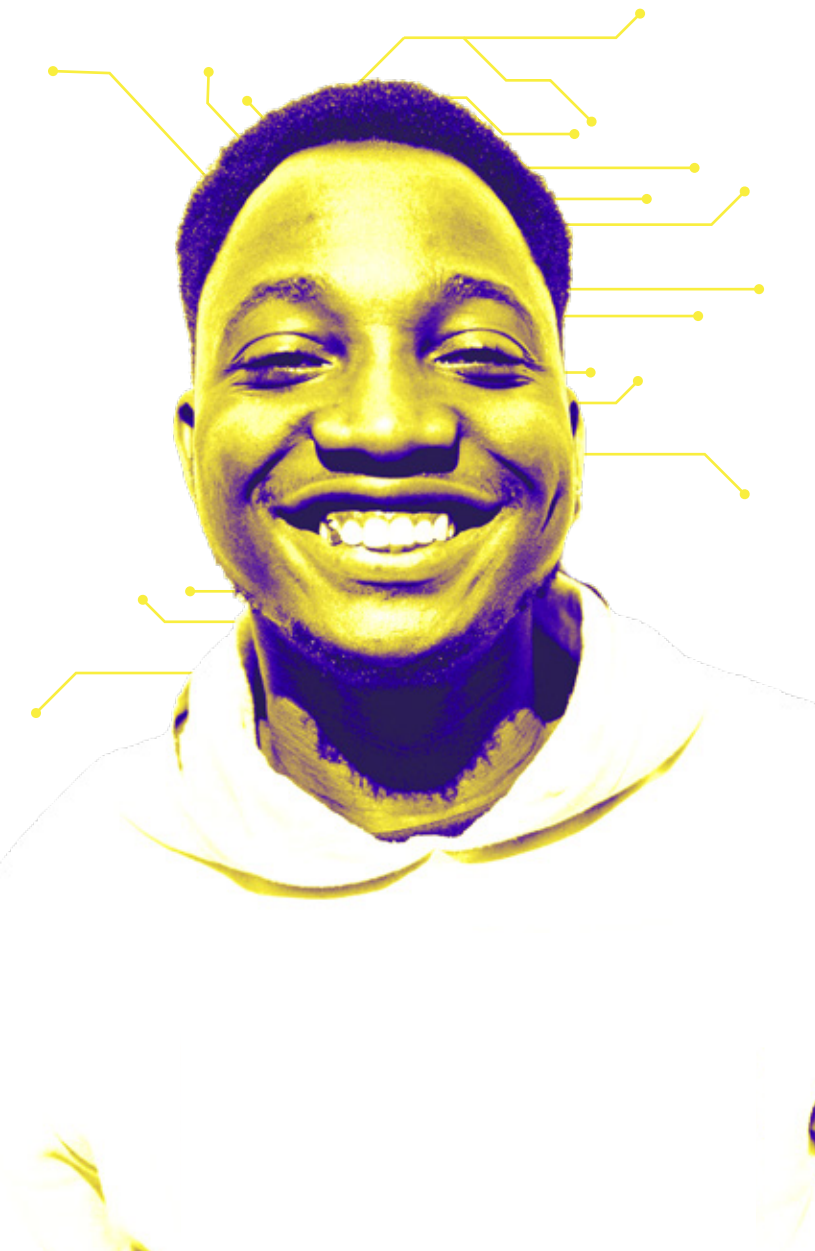
The joint programme is to be a catalyst that builds on and leverages existing initiatives. It will leverage the convening power, expertise and resources of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, the first United Nations system-wide effort for the promotion of youth employment worldwide. Its diverse, multi-stakeholder alliance of over 70 partners - including UN entities, governments, the private sector, foundations and youth organizations - means that the joint programme will be able to deliver system-wide impact and change. The programme will also benefit from the momentum already established by the ILO-ITU-led Digital Skills for Jobs Campaign.



The ILO is to lead in the areas of youth employment analysis and data collection, nationally and regionally building on its expertise in employment and labour markets, its authority with regards to labour standards and its connections with governments and workers' and employers' organizations. A defining feature of the ILO's approach to partnerships is its ability to build the mechanisms and institutions of social dialogue and tripartism.

Enabling and accelerating digital transformation is at the heart of the ITU's work on the continent. Partnership is critical to advancing digital development. Introducing emerging technologies and digital solutions to areas such as agriculture, education, health and finance can only be achieved through collective effort. In collaboration with partners, the ITU will lead in the delivery of digital capacity development and training, as well as promoting digital skills for all, with a special focus on marginalized populations.

Championing digital development and youth employment in Africa, the AU has a key role to play in convening member states to share knowledge, forge partnerships and support scaling-up what works. The programme will capitalize on the AU's African Skills Portal for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (ASPYEE), a knowledge platform for the promotion of African-owned, innovative approaches to skills development and decent employment on the continent of Africa.



## SHARE YOUR IDEAS.

JOIN THE PROGRAMME TO SCALE-UP  
ACTION AND IMPACT FOR YOUTH.

### CONTACT US

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