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African Digital Economy & Inclusivity Conference (AFDEIC 2025)
Theme: AI and Africa's Digital Economy: Leaving No One Behind
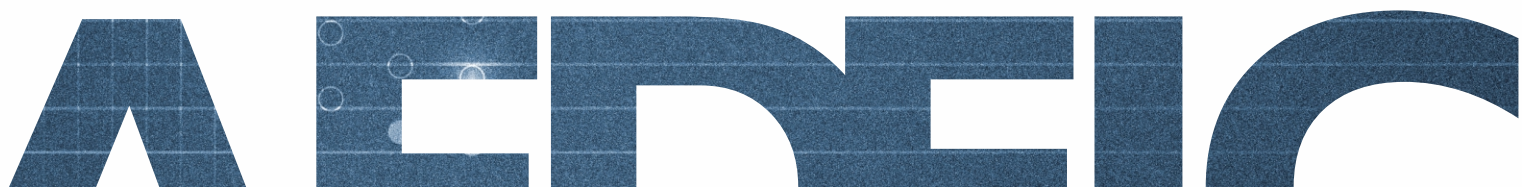Abuja, Nigeria
August 12–14, 2025

Introduction

The African Digital Economy & Inclusivity Conference (AFDEIC 2025) is a critical platform for addressing Africa's participation in the rapidly evolving global digital economy, with a renewed emphasis on harnessing the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI). As digitalisation continues to reshape industries, commerce, and social interactions, Africa's engagement remains inconsistent. While urban centres and certain demographics reap the benefits of technological advancements, rural areas, and marginalised populations remain disconnected. According to the International Telecommunications Union's 'Measuring Digital Development Facts and Figures 2022', 73% of Africans in rural areas lack access to the internet. GSMA's 2024 report revealed that 61% of rural Nigerians lack mobile internet access, a stark illustration of the continent's digital divide. This disparity hinders the equitable distribution of opportunities associated with the digital economy and draws attention to the urgency for targeted interventions. AFDEIC 2025 aims to stimulate discussions and catalyse solutions to bridge these gaps, ensuring that Africa transitions into a digitally inclusive and globally competitive region.

The inclusion of AI in Africa's digital strategy has the potential to revolutionise various sectors, from healthcare to agriculture, education, and governance. AI applications, combined with big data, can provide unprecedented insights and drive evidence-based decision-making. For instance, AI-powered solutions can optimise agricultural productivity, improve public health responses, and enhance financial services. However, the adoption of AI in Africa is not without challenges. Limited access to advanced computing resources, concerns about data privacy, and the risk of exacerbating existing inequalities are critical issues that require attention. AFDEIC 2025 will explore how AI can be harnessed responsibly and equitably to accelerate development across the continent.

Africa's digital economy presents a unique combination of opportunities and challenges. With over half of its population comprising youth, increasing mobile connectivity, and the emergence of innovation hubs in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, the continent is well-positioned to become a leader in digital innovation. Fintech success stories such as M-Pesa in Kenya and Flutterwave in Nigeria demonstrate how technological advancements can empower millions, especially those excluded from traditional financial systems. However, systemic challenges such as weak broadband infrastructure, high costs of data, fragmented regulatory policies, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities impede

widespread participation. These barriers are further compounded by a significant digital skills gap, as shown by Africa's ranking of 103rd in the Wiley Digital Skills Gap Index.

Africa's historical exclusion from major global revolutions—including the Industrial and Green Revolutions—has perpetuated cycles of underdevelopment and dependency. While the Industrial Revolution propelled Europe and North America to economic dominance, Africa's role was largely restricted to resource extraction under colonial regimes, stifling local industrialisation. Similarly, the Green Revolution transformed agricultural productivity in regions such as Asia and Latin America, but its impact in Africa was minimal due to limited access to technologies and resources. The ongoing digital and AI revolution presents a unique opportunity for Africa to rewrite this narrative. By leveraging digital tools and emerging technologies, Africa can overcome historical disadvantages, promote equitable growth, and reduce dependency on traditional economic models. AFDEIC 2025 seeks to create a collaborative forum for stakeholders to address systemic barriers while leveraging Africa's strengths.

The conference theme, *AI and Africa's Digital Economy: Leaving No One Behind,* reflects the urgency of promoting inclusivity and innovation across the continent. AFDEIC 2025 will prioritise discussions on key areas such as digital equity, financial inclusion, and sustainable development, while also exploring new sub-themes to address emerging priorities. These include leveraging AI and big data for development, addressing cybersecurity threats and their mitigation, and creating enabling environments for startups. The integration of AI into these discussions underscores its potential to transform Africa's digital economy and bridge existing gaps. For instance, AI-driven solutions can enhance financial inclusion by improving credit access for underserved communities, while big data analytics can provide critical insights for effective policy-making.

In addition to infrastructure and technological adoption, the conference will focus on developing a robust ecosystem to support innovation. Startups play a pivotal role in driving digital transformation, particularly in Africa's dynamic fintech and e-commerce sectors. However, many face challenges such as limited funding, regulatory hurdles, and inadequate mentorship. Creating an enabling environment for startups involves addressing these barriers, fostering public-private partnerships, and providing platforms for knowledge exchange. AFDEIC 2025 will showcase successful African startups and discuss strategies for scaling their impact.

Another critical focus area is cybersecurity, an increasingly pressing concern in the digital age. As Africa's digital economy grows, so do the risks of cyberattacks, data breaches, and financial fraud. Addressing these threats requires comprehensive strategies that include robust legal frameworks, capacity building for cybersecurity professionals, and fostering a culture of digital security awareness. AFDEIC 2025 will provide a platform for stakeholders to share best practices and innovative solutions to enhance Africa's resilience against cyber

threats.

AFDEIC 2025 is not just a dialogue but a call to action. The conference aims to bridge gaps in access, infrastructure, skills, and governance, ensuring that Africa not only participates in the global digital economy but also shapes its trajectory. Through collaborative efforts, it seeks to unlock the continent's potential for economic and social achievement, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). AFDEIC 2025 envisions a future in which no one is left behind in Africa's digital transformation path by embracing AI and promoting inclusive policies.

Conference Objectives
AFDEIC 2025 seeks to achieve the following objectives:
1. **Promote Inclusive Growth**: Encourage equitable access to digital resources, with a focus on underserved and marginalised communities.
2. **Stimulate Digital Innovation**: Showcase advancements in fintech, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, and other key areas driving Africa's digital transformation.
3. **Strengthen Digital Governance**: Develop policy frameworks that address cybersecurity, data privacy, and regulatory harmonisation.
4. **Enhance Digital Literacy and Skills**: Advocate for education systems and training programmes that prepare Africa's workforce for the demands of the digital age.
5. **Facilitate Investment and Partnerships**: Promote public-private collaborations that drive infrastructure development and digital inclusion initiatives.
6. **Support Sustainable Development**: Explore green technologies and environmentally responsible practices in Africa's digital economy.

Conference Theme
AI and Africa's Digital Economy: Leaving No One Behind
This theme draws attention to the critical need to address systemic inequalities in digital access, participation, and technological adoption. It stresses the transformative role of AI in bridging these gaps by promoting innovative solutions that empower all Africans to harness the benefits of digital transformation. Africa can promote societal development, encourage equitable economic growth, and guarantee that no person or community is left behind by the potential presented by the digital age by harnessing AI and big data.

Sub-Themes

AFDEIC 2025 invites papers addressing the following sub-themes:

1. Bridging the Digital Divide
- Infrastructure development for rural and underserved areas.
- Affordability and accessibility of broadband internet.
- Community-driven models for digital inclusion.

2. Gender and Age Inclusivity in Digital Transformation
- Empowering women through digital literacy and entrepreneurship.
- Strategies for ensuring intergenerational participation in the digital economy.

3. Education and Skills Development for the Digital Economy
- Integrating STEM into African education systems.
- Developing skills in artificial intelligence and data science.
- Building entrepreneurial capacities for youth and women.

4. Leveraging AI and Big Data for Development
- Using AI and big data analytics for evidence-based policy-making.
- Applications of AI in key sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and education.
- Addressing ethical concerns in the deployment of AI technologies.

5. Policy and Governance for a Digital Africa
- Regulatory harmonisation to support cross-border digital trade.
- Data protection laws and their implementation.
- Enhancing cybersecurity infrastructure and resilience.

6. Cybersecurity Threats and Mitigation Strategies
- Identifying emerging cybersecurity threats in Africa's digital landscape.
- Developing comprehensive frameworks for cyber resilience.
- Building capacity for cybersecurity professionals and fostering awareness.

7. Innovations in Fintech and E-commerce
- Role of mobile money in promoting financial inclusion.
- Scaling e-commerce platforms in local and regional markets.
- African success stories in digital entrepreneurship.

8. Creating an Enabling Environment for Startups
- Supporting startups through funding, mentorship, and capacity building.
- Public-private partnerships as catalysts for innovation.
- Showcasing African startup ecosystems and success stories.

9. Sustainability and Emerging Technologies
- Green technologies for sustainable digital infrastructure.
- Harnessing AI, blockchain, and big data for social impact.
- Ethical considerations in the adoption of emerging technologies.

Expected Outcomes

AFDEIC 2025 seeks to:
1. Develop a roadmap for achieving digital equity across Africa.

2. Publish a collection of peer-reviewed papers in leading academic journals.
3. Establish actionable policy recommendations for digital governance.
4. Promote cross-sector partnerships to accelerate infrastructure and skill development.
5. Showcase African innovations and success stories on a global stage.

Conference Highlights

- **Keynote Addresses**: Delivered by global thought leaders in digital transformation.
- **Panel Discussions**: Interactive sessions on policy, technology, and innovation.
- **Workshops**: Practical training on digital skills and entrepreneurship.
- **Exhibitions**: Showcasing African digital innovations and startups.

Submission Guidelines

Abstract Submission Deadline: February 30, 2025
Full Paper Submission Deadline: May 09, 2025
Submission Details:
o Abstracts should not exceed 300 words and must include the title, author(s), affiliation(s), and contact details.
o Full papers should range between 5,000 and 7,000 words and adhere to the APA style of referencing.

Submission Platform: conference@afdeic.com

Contact Information

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