Convergence

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2024 Q4 AI IN AFRICA

SUMMARY REPORT

Education, Innovation & Policy

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At Convergence, we are dedicated to fostering the adoption of AI in Africa, mainly for economic growth and transformation through innovation, research and development, advising policies, and collaboration with key stakeholders. We aim to utilize AI as a catalyst for holistic growth and economic transformation on the continent.

This report was gathered through desk research of various African initiatives from October to December 2024, the year's fourth quarter (Q4).

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List of Abbreviations

Acronyms
ACHPR - African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AI – Artificial Intelligence
AU – African Union
AUDA-NEPAD
BoN – Bank of Namibia
DLI – Deep Learning Institute
EAII – Ethiopia Artificial Intelligence Institute
ECDPM - European Centre for Development Policy Management
G7 - Group of Seven
ICPC – The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission
IUEA - International University of East Africa
LLMs – Large Language Models
MUBAS - Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences
PHIM - The Public Health Institute of Malawi
TBS – Tanzania Bureau of Standards
UM6P - Mohammed VI Polytechnic University
UN- United Nations
UNDP- United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESWA – University of Eswatini
UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WCS - Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF - World Wildlife Fund

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1. Executive Summary

The global AI discussion surged in 2024, and Africa was not left behind in engaging conversations on using the advanced technology to promote economic growth, development, and transformation across the continent. This report delves into the current landscape of AI in Africa, highlighting key developments around AI Policy and Regulation, Education and Capacity Building, and Innovation and Development in Q4 2024.

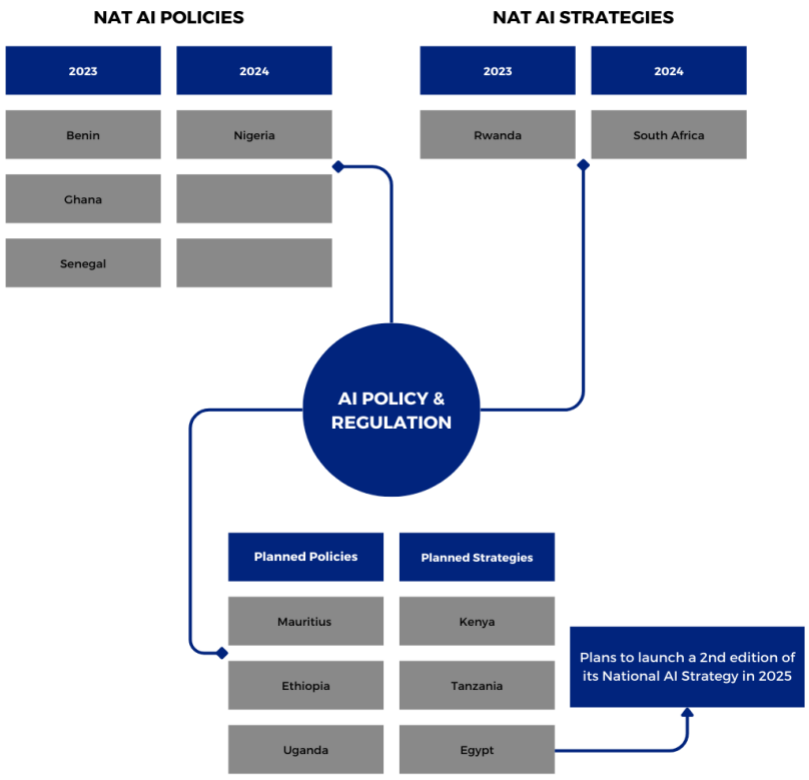

Figure 1: National AI Strategies & Policies 2023/2024

Regarding policy and regulation, African nations have demonstrated significant effort in promoting AI governance. Several countries launched their National AI Strategies, while others updated their existing strategies. In 2024, only Nigeria launched its National AI Strategy, compared to 2023, when three African countries (Benin, Senegal, and Ghana) launched their National AI strategies. South Africa launched its National AI policy in Q3 of 2024, making it the second nation with a National AI policy after Rwanda.

Several nations have also announced plans to implement AI regulations. Mauritius recently asked the general public for input on its AI policy, while Ethiopia's Council of Ministers unanimously decided to implement the National Artificial Intelligence Policy. Kenya and Tanzania also announced plans to develop their AI strategies.

Significant collaboration occurred between African nations and international stakeholders to establish frameworks that promote responsible AI development. For instance, the US and Nigeria worked together on aligned and interoperable frameworks for AI governance in Africa. The United Nations also made noteworthy strides in advancing responsible AI initiatives.

The continent also made significant strides in promoting AI skills through education and capacity-building initiatives. Multinational organizations and the public and private sectors collaborated extensively to train Africans in essential AI skills. In terms of innovation and development, numerous advancements were made in various sectors, including healthcare, education, agriculture, and tourism.

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2. Policy and Regulation.

2.1. Global Initiatives

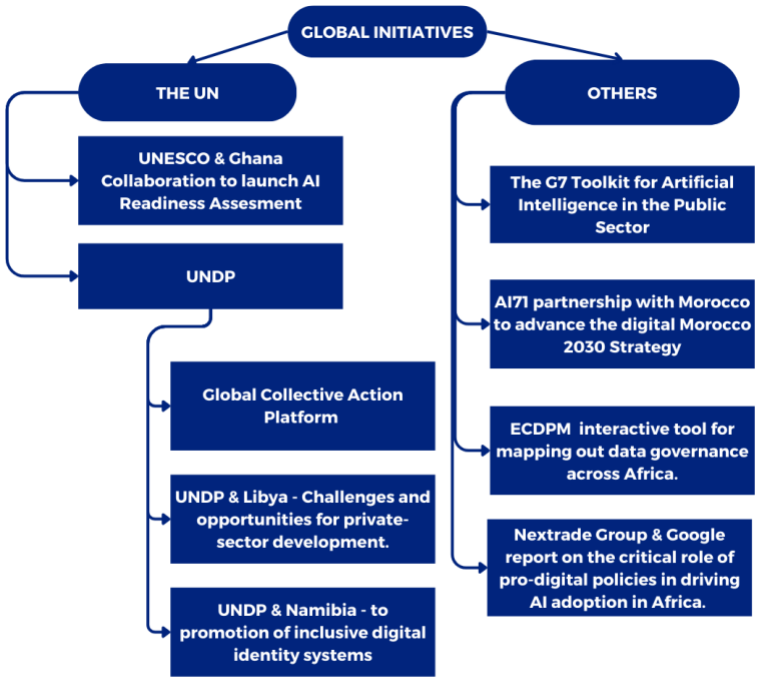

Figure 2: Global Initiatives in Policy & Regulation

UN Initiatives and Resolutions on AI in Africa.

The UN played a crucial role in fostering responsible AI development in Africa in Q4 2024, emphasizing the importance of ethical considerations, inclusivity, collaboration among stakeholders, and the active engagement of the private sector. For instance, UNESCO collaborated with Ghana to launch the AI Readiness Assessment, emphasizing the importance of ethical AI development. This initiative aimed to guide Ghana in harnessing the potential of AI while mitigating potential risks.

Furthermore, the UNDP actively promotes responsible AI for sustainable development. The launch of the Global Collective Action Platform demonstrated a commitment to using AI to address global challenges while prioritizing the needs of developing countries. This platform

aimed to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders to ensure that AI benefits all of humanity.

In Libya, the UNDP facilitated a high-level strategic meeting to discuss challenges and opportunities for private-sector development. This workshop aimed to exchange knowledge, share global best practices and explore innovative strategies that can be applied in Libya. It demonstrated the UNDP's commitment to fostering an environment conducive to private sector involvement in AI development.

Beyond these specific initiatives, the UNDP also worked to tackle critical issues such as digital inclusion and promote private-sector engagement. For example, it partnered with local stakeholders in Namibia to advance inclusive digital identity systems. By addressing the challenges that rural and marginalized communities face in accessing and utilizing digital services, these initiatives aimed to ensure that the advantages of AI were equitably shared across all segments of society.

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Other Initiatives

Beyond the UN's efforts, several significant global initiatives have shaped the AI landscape in Africa. The G7 Toolkit for Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector, created by G7 member states, offers valuable guidance for policymakers and public sector leaders on safely, securely, and responsibly adopting AI technologies. This comprehensive resource provides practical insights and best practices for leveraging AI within government while ensuring ethical and responsible use.

AI71 partnered with Morocco to promote digital transformation in alignment with the country's "Digital Morocco 2030" strategy. This collaboration aimed to utilize AI solutions to improve citizens' access to government services and enhance public experience.

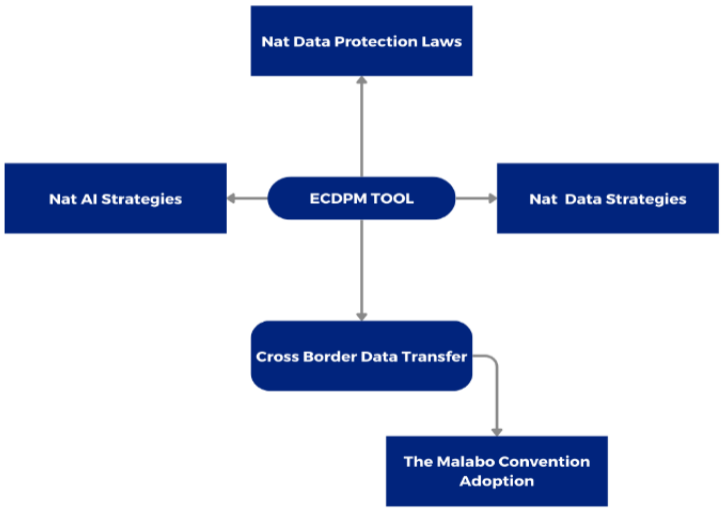

Figure 3: ECDPM Tool Focus Areas

Understanding the evolving landscape of African data governance is essential for responsible AI development. The ECDPM also introduced an interactive tool that offers a comprehensive overview of data governance across the continent. This tool maps national data protection laws, data strategies, and AI policies, specifically emphasizing cross-border data sharing. It provides valuable insights into the advancements of data governance frameworks and their implications for cross-border data flows, which are crucial for promoting regional and international AI collaboration.

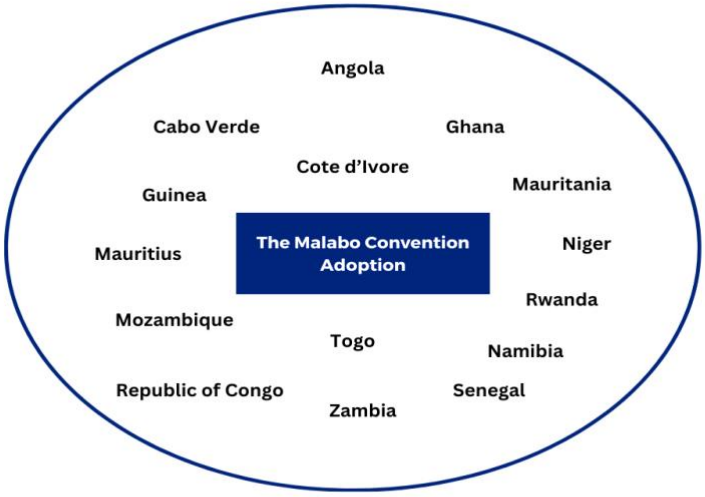

Figure 4: The Malabo Convention Adoption

Finally, a report by Nextrade Group and Google highlighted the critical role of pro-digital policies in promoting AI adoption in Africa. This research emphasized the significance of investing in digital infrastructure, fostering AI skills development, and creating a supportive environment for AI innovation. These findings underscored the need for African nations to prioritize establishing strong digital policies to maximize AI's benefits for economic growth and social advancement.

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2.2. Regional Initiatives

The AU Stance on AI in Africa

In Q3, the African Union (AU) launched the Continental AI Strategy, which showcased strong support for responsible AI development. This groundbreaking strategy offered a framework for member states to navigate the complexities of AI development and adoption while prioritizing ethical considerations, inclusivity, and equitable access.

Building on this momentum, the AU continued to promote dialogue and collaboration surrounding AI governance in Q4. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) held a consultation meeting to assess the updated draft of its study on AI, robotics, and human rights in Africa. This ongoing dialogue highlights the AU's dedication to ensuring that AI development respects and upholds human rights principles.

Furthermore, AUDA-NEPAD was vital in promoting the conversation about AI in Africa. In partnership with NYU Africa House, AUDA-NEPAD hosted a pivotal event titled "Africa AI Blueprint: Building a Sustainable and Inclusive AI Ecosystem." This high-level gathering brought together key stakeholders to explore the opportunities and challenges of AI in Africa, concentrating on essential issues such as data sovereignty and the potential of AI to stimulate economic growth.

Furthermore, AUDA-NEPAD advocated for the responsible integration of AI in healthcare. During the 4th African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization Week, AUDA-NEPAD underscored the importance of developing a phased framework to assist African regulators in employing AI within the healthcare sector. This framework highlights the necessity for ethical oversight, risk mitigation, and the establishment of public trust, ensuring that AI technologies are utilized responsibly and effectively to enhance healthcare outcomes throughout the continent.

Through these initiatives, the AU has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to fostering an environment that promotes responsible AI development in Africa. We anticipate seeing more of these initiatives in 2025. By encouraging dialogue, collaboration, and the creation of ethical guidelines, the AU aims to ensure that AI benefits African citizens and contributes to the continent's sustainable development.

Regional collaborations and knowledge sharing

Regional collaborations and knowledge sharing are essential for navigating the complexities of African AI development. Afreximbank led initiatives to improve compliance in African trade by incorporating AI into financial and regulatory processes. This initiative aimed to streamline operations, mitigate financial crime risk, and promote more significant intra-African trade.

Additionally, the 13th Internet Governance Forum in Addis Ababa underscored the urgent need for intergovernmental collaboration in AI regulation. African legislators gathered to discuss challenges and share experiences navigating the rapidly changing technological landscape. Participants highlighted the need for a balanced approach that harmonizes technological progress with strong regulatory frameworks, acknowledging the necessity of ensuring equitable access and reducing potential risks.

2.3. National Level Initiatives

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Morocco

Morocco has made significant progress by launching its "Digital Morocco 2030" strategy, which aims to establish the country as a global digital hub. This ambitious initiative leverages the power of AI and blockchain technology to foster economic growth. By 2030, Morocco intends to create a substantial number of jobs in the digital sector, significantly increase digital export revenues, and enhance the overall contribution of the digital economy.

South Africa

South Africa also demonstrated a strong commitment to AI development in Q4. Following the launch of its National AI policy in Q3, the country extensively consulted on a research-intensive framework focusing on research and innovation, talent development, and infrastructure enhancement. Key initiatives include establishing dedicated AI research centers and providing financial incentives to nurture a flourishing AI ecosystem.

Uganda

The Ugandan government recently announced its plan to draft a national AI policy framework. This framework aims to balance AI's transformative potential with ethical, societal, and

developmental considerations. The proposed policy also seeks to promote responsible AI use while ensuring that the technology aligns with Uganda's developmental goals.

Algeria

Algeria is actively pursuing the implementation of its National AI Strategy for 2020-2030. The National Artificial Intelligence Strategy has undergone several revisions since its initial launch by the country's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 2019. Algeria's AI Council, which includes government officials, experts, and stakeholders, recently convened to discuss the next phase of this National AI Strategy. A crucial aspect of the 2025-2030 phase will be the extent to which top national AI talent can be engaged to position Algeria as a leading AI hub. Although challenges such as limited computing resources and the need for greater digitization persist, Algeria is striving to overcome these obstacles and unlock the full potential of AI.

Kenya

Kenya also adopted a positive stance on AI governance by launching its first-ever Diplomat's Playbook on AI Governance. This valuable resource enables Kenyan diplomats to effectively navigate the intricate global AI policy landscape and advocate for ethical and inclusive AI development.

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Egypt

Egypt is set to launch the second edition of its National AI Strategy in 2025. This updated strategy aims to increase the use of AI to address societal challenges, enhance initiatives for developing AI talent, and strengthen the computational infrastructure necessary for AI efforts in both the public and private sectors.

Tanzania

The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) is taking proactive measures to ensure the safe and secure use of AI in Tanzania. TBS is developing essential standards and guidelines that will encourage the ethical and responsible use of AI technologies in Tanzania.

Nigeria

The United States, in collaboration with Nigeria and other international partners, is actively working on the development of interoperable AI governance frameworks for African nations. This

joint initiative aims to foster innovation and ensure the responsible use of AI throughout the African continent. Moreover, Lagos State in Nigeria is leading the way in AI governance within the country. By creating and implementing the first AI guidelines in Nigeria, Lagos State sets a strong example for ethical and responsible AI use across the nation. These guidelines, developed in partnership with the Federal AI Collective, will be essential in shaping the future of AI in Nigeria.

Country	Initiative	Description
Morocco	Digital Morocco 2030 Strategy	Leveraging AI & Blockchain to foster economic Growth Establish Morocco as a global digital hub
S.Africa	Research Framework	Establishment of AI research centers Financial incentives to nurture the AI ecosystem
Uganda	National AI Policy Plan	Promote responsible AI use
Algeria	National AI Strategy 2020-2030	Using top national AI talent can to position Algeria as a leading AI hub,
Kenya	AI Governance Diplomat's Playbook	Effective navigatlon in the global AI policy landscape.
Egypt	2nd National AI Strategy	Increase the use of AI to address societal challenges. Enhance initiatives for developing AI talent Strengthen the computational infrastructure for AI efforts in the public and private sectors.
Nigeria	Interoperable AI Governance Framework	Joint initiative to foster innovation and ensure the responsible use of AI throughout the African continent.

Figure 5: National Level Initiatives by country

3. Education and Capacity Building

3.1. Building AI skills and Expertise

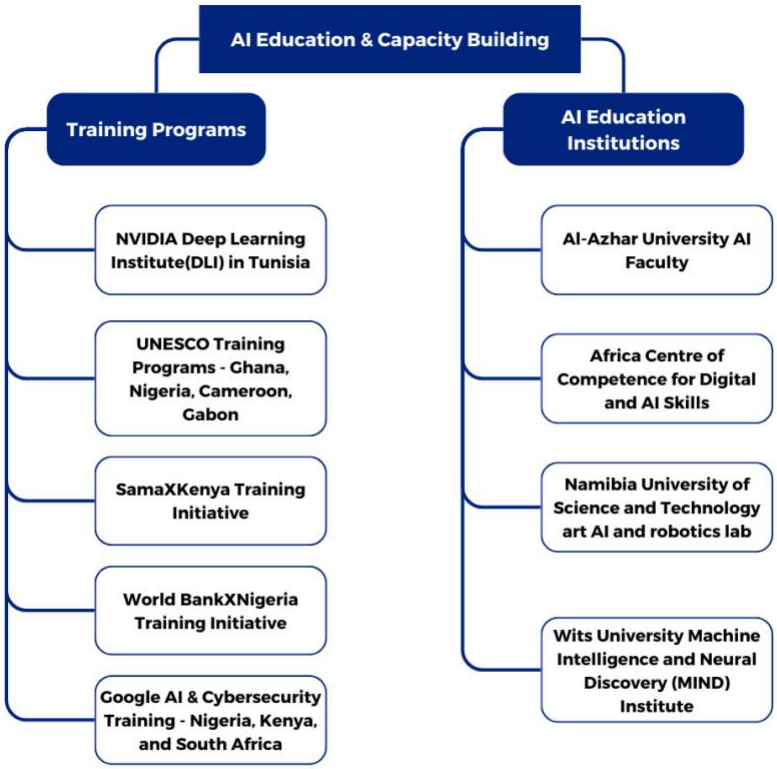

Figure 6: AI Trainings & Institutions

Training Programs

Throughout Q4, Africa saw a significant rise in interest and investment in AI training programs. To keep up with this rapid expansion, various training initiatives were launched to equip individuals with the skills necessary to excel in this dynamic field.

Imagine a hub in Tunisia where developers can access cutting-edge AI training, powerful technologies, and valuable business connections. This is exactly what NVIDIA's Deep Learning Institute (DLI) has created in Novation City. This initiative will help foster a vibrant AI ecosystem, bringing together education, research, and industry to drive AI adoption across Africa.

Meanwhile, journalists in Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Gabon are receiving specialized training from UNESCO. This program will enable them to utilize AI tools and open digital resources for environmental reporting. With access to satellite imagery and 3D modeling, these journalists will acquire the skills needed to investigate and report on vital environmental issues with unprecedented depth and clarity.

The United States has also contributed to the development of AI skills in Africa. Sama, an AI company, is partnering with vocational training colleges in Kenya to create a specialized AI curriculum. This initiative, launched in Homa Bay County, has the potential to serve as a model for nationwide expansion, equipping Kenyans with the skills needed to excel in the AI field.

In addition to traditional training methods, the World Bank also helped pioneer a unique initiative in Nigeria. This program employs free Generative AI tools to improve educational outcomes in Edo State. Generative AI possesses immense potential to produce new educational content, promoting a more engaging and effective learning experience.

Tech giant Google is another key player, pledging a significant investment of $5.8 million to support AI and cybersecurity training initiatives in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. This builds on Google's existing commitment to digital skills development in Africa, which acknowledges the vital role these skills play in the continent's growing tech ecosystem.

Universities are also adapting to the changing landscape. The International University of East Africa (IUEA) is making a significant move by launching new programs in robotics and climate-smart agriculture beginning in January 2025. This initiative showcases a forward-thinking approach, equipping students with the skills needed to address critical challenges and contribute to sustainable development in Africa.

Finally, Nigerian technology firm Instig Labs is adopting a community-driven approach. Their AI community program provides free Generative AI training to young Nigerians, empowering them to explore the potential of this transformative technology and contribute to the nation's AI future. These training programs represent a small part of the exciting developments happening across Africa. By equipping individuals with essential skills and knowledge, these initiatives are laying the groundwork for a future where AI acts as a powerful tool for progress and innovation on the continent.

AI Education Institutions

Educational institutions also made significant progress in equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the AI era. From launching pioneering AI programs to establishing state-of-the-art research centers, these institutions have played a crucial role in shaping the future of AI in Africa.

Al-Azhar University, a distinguished institution with a rich history, has embraced the digital age. The university president announced plans to create a dedicated faculty for artificial intelligence, demonstrating a commitment to staying at the forefront of knowledge and innovation. This progressive initiative represented a crucial step towards modernizing education and equipping students for the demands of the 21st century.

Kenya, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Microsoft, has established the Africa Centre of Competence for Digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Skills. This innovative center, located at the Kenya School of Government in Nairobi, will act as a hub for public sector innovation, utilizing digital and AI technologies to enhance service delivery across the continent.

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The Zambian government has also made significant strides in AI education. In partnership with Ecobank, the government committed to transforming Katoba Secondary School into an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Center of Excellence. This initiative serves as a model for other schools nationwide, promoting the rollout of AI-assisted learning aids and technologies.

The private sector also actively contributed to AI education initiatives. Deloitte launched its Innovation Hub in Cairo, representing a significant milestone in promoting innovation and developing top-tier talent in Egypt. This hub, employing over 350 skilled professionals, will serve as a platform for providing cutting-edge services in areas like Artificial Intelligence and Data Analysis, making a substantial contribution to Egypt's expanding AI ecosystem.

The Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first university in Africa to implement ChatGPT Edu. This innovative AI tool is expected to revolutionize education at UM6P by enriching learning experiences, streamlining research, and enhancing administrative efficiency.

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), in partnership with the Bank of Namibia (BoN), has launched a state-of-the-art AI and robotics lab. This facility will serve as an accelerator, encouraging students, faculty, and industry professionals to actively engage in solving real-world challenges using AI and robotics technologies.

Lastly, South Africa's Wits University made a significant advancement with the launch of the Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery (MIND) Institute. This pan-African AI center aims to conduct impactful research, cultivate AI talent, and inform policy-making regarding the ethical and responsible use of AI in Africa.

3.2. Public-Private Partnerships

Collaboration is essential for unlocking AI's full potential in Africa. In the fourth quarter, strategic partnerships among governments, international organizations, and the private sector facilitated significant advancements in AI education and capacity building throughout the continent.

Togo's partnership with the Commonwealth is a prime example. This framework for cooperation outlines key areas of focus, including artificial intelligence and digital transformation, renewable energy, and skills development. This collaboration will continue to provide Togo with valuable expertise and support in these critical areas, driving sustainable development and economic growth.

Bridging the digital divide is a critical goal. Nokia and UNICEF collaborated on a project in Senegal aimed at enhancing digital education and training in schools. This initiative provided teachers and students with essential digital skills, such as coding, empowering them to succeed in an increasingly digital world.

The private sector is also actively engaged in initiatives to build AI capacity. Microsoft East Africa launched a program to equip over 100,000 Kenyan workers with essential AI job skills. This initiative aims to bridge the critical skills gap and empower individuals across various sectors, including education, health, and agriculture.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on research and development in

sustainable development. This partnership will leverage AI and machine learning to enhance evidence-based programming and support data-driven decision-making.

The UK government has demonstrated its commitment to supporting science and technology in Africa. Through its West Africa Research and Innovation Hub, the government has pledged funding to enhance science, technology, and innovation in Ghana and Nigeria. This initiative will encourage the commercialization of innovative solutions, strengthen innovation policy, and improve government digital service delivery.

These partnerships signify an important step toward creating a strong and inclusive AI ecosystem in Africa. By promoting cooperation and utilizing the strengths of various stakeholders, these initiatives empower individuals, drive innovation, and shape a future where AI acts as a vital tool for progress and development throughout the continent.

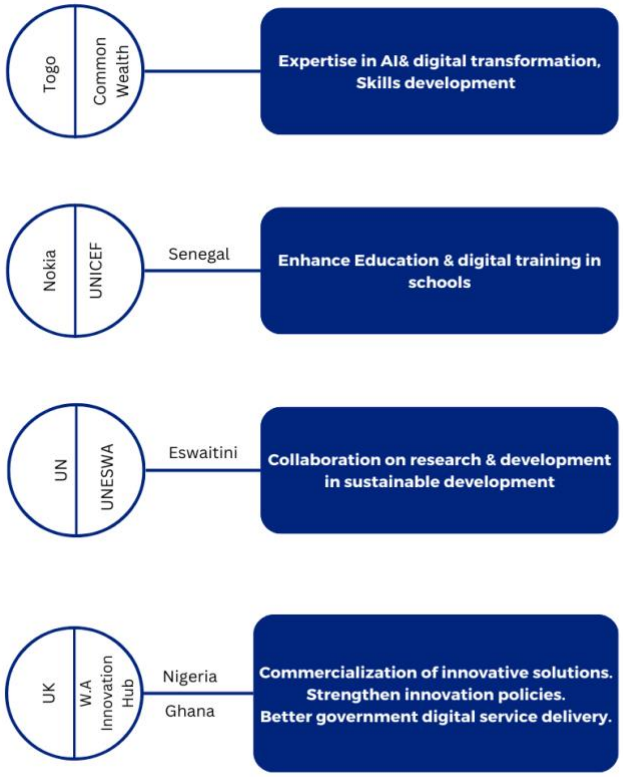

Figure 7: Public Private Partnerships

4. Innovation and Development

Africa is rapidly emerging as an AI innovation hub. Developments have occurred in key priority sectors such as healthcare, Tourism, and Democracy.

4.1. Healthcare

In Kenya, Google and Jacaranda Health partnered to explore the potential of AI-assisted ultrasound machines for enhancing maternal and neonatal health. This initiative aimed to address the limitations of traditional ultrasound technology, including high costs, frequent power outages, and the necessity for specialized operators, which significantly restricted access for many pregnant women. By utilizing AI, this partnership intended to boost the availability and affordability of essential prenatal care services.

The role of AI in improving health outcomes was further highlighted at the 2024 World Health Summit in Berlin. The summit brought together global leaders, health experts, and policymakers to discuss how AI technologies can be leveraged to address urgent global health challenges, emphasizing the growing acknowledgment of AI's potential to transform healthcare delivery on a global scale.

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Recognizing the vital role of innovation in healthcare, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) partnered with the Government of Rwanda to establish the HealthTech Hub. This initiative aimed to overcome systemic barriers and promote the development, scaling, and sustainability of health innovations within various healthcare environments across the continent. By empowering African youth to tackle healthcare challenges, the HealthTech Hub aimed to drive innovation and enhance health outcomes for communities throughout Africa.

Moreover, the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) collaborated with the Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM) to improve the management of disease surveillance data. This partnership utilized advanced Large Language Models (LLMs) to offer guidance and training to healthcare professionals on collecting, analyzing, and applying pandemic-related data. This initiative showcased the potential of AI to enhance data-driven decision-making in public health and bolster preparedness for future health emergencies.

4.2. Tourism

AI is increasingly important in the African tourism sector, driving innovation and enhancing the visitor experience.

In Kenya, the battle against rhino poaching has received a significant boost with the deployment of AI-enabled thermal cameras at key rhino sites. This technology, supported by the U.S. Department of State and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), enhances wildlife conservation efforts by facilitating more effective monitoring and deterring illegal activities.

In addition to wildlife conservation, AI is also being utilized to enhance efforts in marine biodiversity conservation. In Mozambique, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has leveraged satellite data and AI algorithms to identify previously unmapped areas with high marine biodiversity. This groundbreaking research will inform marine conservation strategies and aid in the expansion of marine protected areas.

Additionally, Kenya has acknowledged the potential of AI to stimulate tourism growth. The Kenyan government has teamed up with Google to utilize the tech giant's AI-driven platforms for analyzing tourism data and identifying key travel trends. This partnership aims to provide deeper insights into traveler preferences and demographics, allowing the country to customize its tourism offerings to meet the changing needs of visitors and enhance the overall visitor experience.

4.3. Government and Democracy

In Q4 2024, several African nations examined the potential of AI to improve justice systems and protect democracy.

Rwanda, recognizing the need to enhance the quality and delivery of justice to its citizens, initiated plans to incorporate AI into its judicial systems. This initiative aimed to utilize AI to streamline processes, boost efficiency, and improve access to justice for all citizens, while also acknowledging the importance of tackling challenges related to digital literacy and accessibility.

In Ethiopia, the Artificial Intelligence Institute (EAII) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Justice to create an Integrated Crime Information Management System. This AI-powered system, anticipated to be completed within a year, will transform criminal justice operations. By streamlining processes, enhancing data management, and improving accessibility, this system will significantly enhance the capacity and efficiency of the Ethiopian justice sector.

Nigeria also showed a commitment to using AI for democratic governance. The country examined the potential of AI to protect democracy, acknowledging the vital role of technology in creating a fair and prosperous society.

Furthermore, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in Nigeria announced plans to use AI to combat corruption. By utilizing AI-powered tools, the ICPC aimed to improve its capacity to identify and address corrupt practices more effectively, thereby promoting greater transparency and accountability within the Nigerian government.

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5. Conclusion

Q4 2024 witnessed a surge in AI activity across Africa, with a focus on policy development, education and capacity building, and innovation in key sectors. African nations continued to prioritize AI governance. Collaboration with international stakeholders, particularly the UN, was crucial in fostering responsible AI development.

There was significant effort to equip Africans with AI skills. Numerous training programs emerged, targeting diverse audiences, from journalists to developers. Educational institutions also played a crucial role, with universities launching new AI programs, establishing research centers, and embracing innovative technologies. Africa also showcased major AI innovations across various sectors, such as healthcare and others.

Looking ahead to 2025, it is evident that African nations will continue making further advancements in AI policy frameworks. Countries like Egypt have already announced their plans to launch the second edition of the National AI Strategy. Investments in AI education and training programs are likely to continue, with a focus on developing a skilled AI workforce to meet the growing demands of the African economy. We also anticipate a surge in AI innovations across various sectors, including agriculture, finance, and energy, driving innovation and economic growth.

With various resources and tools already in place, Africa is poised to make significant advancements in AI by 2025. For example, the IMF AI Readiness Index, released in early 2024, will serve as a benchmark for African countries to evaluate their current AI capabilities and identify areas for improvement. This approach will assist African nations in navigating the challenges and opportunities of the AI revolution more effectively, ensuring that AI development fosters inclusive and sustainable growth across the continent. Additionally, the ECDPM Interactive Tool, which offers a comprehensive overview of data governance throughout the continent, will be essential in shaping robust data protection frameworks vital for the ethical and responsible use of AI.

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