

Digital jobs offer skills, promise to Africa's unemployed youth

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JOHANNESBURG/NAIROBI: Although Africa's economy has expanded rapidly in recent years, it has not kept pace with the growth of its youth population or their need for jobs.



Photo: [World Bank](#)

With almost 200 million people between 15 and 24 years old - a figure that is set to double by 2045, according to the African Economic Outlook's (AEO) 2012 report - the continent has the youngest population in the world. Yet despite the increasing percentage of Africa's young people with secondary and tertiary educations, many find themselves unemployed or underemployed in the informal economy. Part of the problem, according to the AEO study, is a mismatch between the skills young jobs seekers have to offer and those that employers need.

The world's increasingly digitalised economy needs workers with the skills to capture and manage the vast amounts of data it generates. With appropriate training, such tasks can be performed anywhere in the world. Data generated by a high-tech company in Silicon Valley, for example, can be processed by youth with smartphones or tablets living in a slum in Nairobi, Kenya. This means that digital work could potentially alleviate the unemployment and poverty hampering development in many African countries.

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