

How African countries rank on AI competitiveness in 2026

Stanford University's Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI) team has released the 2025 Global AI Vibrancy Tool, ranking 36 countries by their artificial intelligence ecosystems — with South Africa the only African nation to feature in the global index.



Source: www.unsplash.com

They used a framework consisting of "seven pillars of AI vibrancy: Research and Development, Responsible AI, Economy, Talent, Policy and Governance, Public Opinion, and Infrastructure."

There was an absolute ranking, and a per capita ranking. On the absolute ranking South Africa came 36th, which globally, is [still] top 20%. In the per capita ranking, South Africa came 31st.

"The per-capita view of the Global Vibrancy Tool highlights nations that "punch above their weight" in AI vibrancy."

It is possible to use this measure for AI competitiveness in Africa, by country, for 2026. The objective is to aggregate options for Africa's reach in the journey to AI frontier, as well as the opportunity of AI, for industrialization.

For now, there are some paths to frontier in artificial intelligence, for Africa, not just through a lot of cutting-edge Graphics Processing Units [GPUs].

While Africa is making efforts with those, where Africa can glitter includes applicable mathematical theories for AI development, AI ethics framework for school and work, as well as models in labor economics in preparation for job displacement or replacement by artificial intelligence.

These are paths that Africa can excel that would bring the spotlight on the teams, in ways that can motivate major partnerships, since answers to questions, are provided from Africa, with a global scope.

Already, in "Research and Development, Responsible AI, Economy, Talent, Policy and Governance, Public Opinion, and Infrastructure", Africa is working at efforts.

There is always some conference, somewhere in Africa, every month on artificial intelligence. The benchmark for the continent is where to be outstanding, not just what to follow or adopt but where to lead and win, within the global AI market.

Africa is supposed to have a robust, rigorous and sophisticated theoretical research in artificial intelligence with exceptional work that would target key improvements, particularly at the frontier.

There are several AI labs, centers, papers, efforts, assistant models and so forth in Africa, but their industrial significance, globally, should matter as an objective, if Africa would stand a chance for whatever is ahead if AI dominates.

Therefore, looking at AI competitiveness in Africa, for 2026, the emphasis are those that may do serious enough work, not just fluff, towards the journey to 2030 and beyond, in AI, for the continent.

Top 10 Ranking in Africa

1. South Africa

South Africa is the most advanced nation in Africa in artificial intelligence. Already, they have world recognition from the Global AI Vibrancy Tool 2025.

They are also working at efforts that are complex enough with promise to lead, within the next few years.

They have had the most serious effort in AI on the continent for more than a decade, in the Centre for Artificial Intelligence Research (CAIR) which "is a distributed South African research network with nine established and two emerging research groups across eight universities funded primarily by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). It is virtually hosted and coordinated by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). CAIR was established in 2011 with the aim of building world class Artificial Intelligence research capacity in South Africa."

Cassava Technologies of South Africa is an NVIDIA Cloud Partner (NCP) in Africa. Cassava deployed 3,000 GPUs [the most on the continent] in South Africa in June, 2025 and established Africa's first network GPU-as-a-Service (GPUaaS) offering.

South Africa also has the formidable Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery Institute (The Wits MIND Institute) at Wits University, "an African-based interdisciplinary AI research hub that pushes the frontiers of scientific understanding of machine, human and animal intelligence." MIND had an initial funding of \$3.3m, from Wits and Google.org gave them \$1m.

2. Eswatini

The Southern Africa nation may triumph at AI in Africa because of what appears to be their converged efforts towards breakthroughs at AI. They are making efforts at AI, but doing so in tactical ways that can ensure that they pick the right routes, which is small enough for success, but expansive enough to lead the rest of the world.

The University of Eswatini has the UNESWA AI Academy, "Eswatini's premier hub for Artificial Intelligence education, innovation, and impact, offering dynamic short courses, immersive certificate programs, cutting edge research opportunities, and community-driven AI initiatives tailored to empower educators,

professionals, students, and policymakers."



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This academy is supported by the government of the country, but carries enormous potential to not just follow other paradigms, but to strike out, in some of their efforts, developing new solutions, and becoming the brightest spot on the continent for artificial intelligence.

3. Egypt

The duality of Egypt, as part of being African, by geography and Middle Eastern by culture, gives them a front seat in the chance to get an enormous lead in Africa, in AI, before the decade is out.

Egypt is abuzz with news on AI, including an AI park, the second edition of Egypt's National AI Strategy (2025–2030), a strategic partnership in AI with India, several AI startups and their preparation for the AI Everything Middle East & Africa (MEA) 2026 conference in Cairo from February 10-12, 2026.

Egypt is also home to the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), driving the attention of the continent to the relevance of AI to trade, while benefiting their host country.

Egypt has an AI Readiness Assessment Report, funded by the European Union.

Egypt, if focused on excellent and substantive vision, can make much more headway in 2026.

4. Nigeria

Nigeria is quite at work in artificial intelligence. However, it does not appear that most of those efforts have objectives to win or be the best in the world, within the near or medium term.

There are known digital challenges of Nigeria that assuming some of their teams are focused on working against those, with AI, and finding solutions, it would become an impressive global leap, to be emulated and rewarded in the capital market, while also reshaping the brand of the nation in a major way.

There are several channels too where the country could use AI for solutions, with their humongous population. They can grow SMEs with AI, induce massive youth employment, scale capacity building, broaden wages and much else.

Google.org recently gave \$2.1m to AI efforts in Nigeria. Nigeria has the Nigerian Artificial Intelligence Research Scheme (NAIRS), boosting publications of AI papers, with 20 papers in around 2 years.

NAIRS opened calls and supported teams with \$3,400, with some papers in AI for traffic solutions and AI for agricultural pest control.

The NAIRS also has the AI Collective, a network of more than 2,000 Nigerian AI practitioners worldwide. There is an OpenAI academy at the University of Lagos. There are several new labs, centers and startups AI across the country.

Nigeria can publish papers and do stuff. What will matter depends on what they can significantly improve.

5. Côte d'Ivoire

The biggest advantage of Côte d'Ivoire to glowing in artificial intelligence, globally is the presence of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group. The AfDB is championing some efforts in AI on the continent as they seem intensely close to their host country, in ensuring many of their benefits touches the country in some form before or along with others.

Côte d'Ivoire is also building massive new regional universities across the country, to expand the opportunity for learning for their youth population.

The country has some excellent science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) Universities, especially the International University of Grand-Bassam (IUGB), whose president Saliou Touré, was the president of the African Mathematical Union, and also the current president of the Mathematical Society of Côte d'Ivoire (SMCI). The University along with others are positioned for immense breakthroughs in new mathematical theorems, for new AI algorithms, as well as for the possibility to design new deep learning architectures, from computational neural modalities.

6. Angola

Angola is an energy behemoth on the continent of Africa. The nation has been on the international spotlight in the last few years, getting visited by a US president as well as having the Angolan president hosted by the successor.

The Angolan president represented the African Union at the first G20 summit in Africa, as well as hosting the United Arab Emirates, on a state visit, where lots of strategic agreements were signed, including for AI.

Angola is the torchbearer for Lusophone Africa — consisting of Mozambique, Guiné-Bissau, Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe.

EY is developing AI solutions for the Angolan energy sector. SLB launched an Africa Performance Center Angola for innovation. Huawei plans a new Research and Development Centre in Angola, for 2027. Africel in Angola, has SMS and USSD based AfriGPT, to ensure that consumer AI is available on feature phones or on smartphones without internet.

Also, Angola's oldest and largest University, Universidade Agostinho Neto, joined The African Engineering and Technology Network as its 9th university partner.

Angola has an edge, if it follows some of the oil-rich states in the Middle East to look towards what comes after oil.

7. Rwanda

Rwanda is establishing an AI Scaling Hub, to innovate, with AI, for solutions to local problems. The initiative is supported with a \$17.5m investment from the Gates Foundation.

Rwanda hosted the Global AI Summit on Africa in April, 2025 in collaboration with the World Economic Forum. Just two presidents from the African continent attended. The conference showed the inclination of

Rwanda to innovate and lead the continent in AI.

Rwanda, in collaboration with GSMA, hosted the Mobile World Conference for Africa, in October 2025. Rwanda has a number of startups in AI as well as a number of universities with some focus on AI as well. Rwanda might have advantages, in fine-tuning AI models, for some use cases.

8. Ghana

Google, in July, 2025 launched its first AI Community Center in Africa in Accra, subsumed into its \$37m investment in AI development on the continent.

This comes after Google opened its first AI research lab in 2019 in Ghana.

Ghana has been hosting marathon AI conferences. There are a couple of universities in the country with some AI labs as well. Ghana will make a difference in AI, depending on what that means to the teams.

9. Kenya

Kenya, in March, 2025 launched its National AI Strategy 2025–2030, towards better regulatory and policy steps to benefit its national development goals.

The Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), in October, 2025 partnered with Microsoft, to launch the Ken Artificial Intelligence Skilling Alliance (KAISA), for AI skills development, innovation, and policy collaboration in the country.

Kenya started the mobile money revolution in Africa, with M-PESA, in 2007 and has been a major force in digital finance as a springboard for AI innovation too. Kenya also had the CyberWeek Africa, in October, 2025.

Kenya, assuming absolutely serious, should be the most aggressive nation in AI research and development in Africa, given the roles that some young people of Kenya were given to filter social media contents for years. Then, label AI contents too, in recent years, working on the low end, as contractors, for big tech, but doing important work to keep many of platforms less harmful to users.

The opportunity that the contractors choose Kenya and the tech firms know, is a trait for advanced peer collaboration, if Kenya offers highest quality in research and innovation in AI — theoretical, mathematical, technical and so forth.

10. Madagascar

The Malagasy Association for Artificial Intelligence is a team with eagerness to make the country the headquarters of French-powered AI on the continent.

Madagascar has a number of AI labs as well as efforts in creating a hub in the Indian Ocean as an AI research destination for the continent and for other Islands across. Madagascar might keep out of small budget efforts in AI, using their distance from continental Africa to dedicate to diligence of immense significance, taking their time too, to have exponential results.

2026 AI in Africa

Several other nations can pull off surprises in 2026 in AI in Africa, with breakthroughs, aside those with the most potential on this list.

Others to watch include Ethiopia, Sénégal, Mauritius, Togo, Morocco, Namibia and Tunisia.

There are possibilities to be the best in AI in Africa for some of the nations that would give it more than the best.

Artificial intelligence may — eventually — not be a technology of equal opportunity, just because everyone has a smartphone and can access it.

AI can replace tasks at work. Now, because most of the industries in Africa follow advancements from elsewhere, several tasks in Africa's labor force that are routine might be replaced by AI, discounting labor value.

If this happens, there are little to no safety nets in Africa. Many complain about the governments, even when AI has not replaced people. So, what happens then. Also, because numerous policies and rights are either not mature or properly enforced, lots of workers might be casualties of AI.

While this is speculative, what are AI teams doing, with very serious work, against such outcomes? Extraordinary work in AI does not have to be an app. AI might be Africa's great leap towards industrialization but that result will not arrive by many of the basic, nominal and amble work that was mostly done in 2025.

This analysis comes from Village County Company Limited, an AI and agribusiness innovation outfit, based in Kumasi, Ghana.

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