



The 13th Academia–Public– Private Partnership Forum– 2025 Kigali, Rwanda on 12-14 March 2025

LEVERAGING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AS A CATALYST FOR INNOVATION IN EAST AFRICA

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Key points

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Industry 4.0 Enablers
- ❖ Africa's AI Potential for Growth and Development
- ❖ Key Steps for Effective AI Adoption and Implementation
- ❖ Fostering Collaboration Between Academia, Industry, and Government
- ❖ Case Studies and Success Stories
- ❖ Virtual Mechatronics Labs – Current Partnership Projects with Industries
- ❖ Key Challenges in AI Adoption in East Africa
- ❖ Recommendations for East Africa
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Virtual Mechatronics Labs (VML) – Pioneering the Future of Engineering and Automation



- Virtual Mechatronics Labs (VML) is a cutting-edge innovation hub dedicated to revolutionizing engineering **education, research, and industrial automation**.
- Based at **Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT)** in Kenya, VML is at the forefront of integrating immersive digital solutions with real-world engineering applications. With a focus on **Industry 4.0 and Industrial Metaverse**, VML is actively collaborating with **industry leaders** to drive forward projects in **AI, VR, AR, and Digital Twin applications**.
- The Industrial Metaverse is emerging as a **game-changing ecosystem** where **Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Digital Twins (DT)** converge to create hyper-realistic, immersive, and **data-driven industrial environments**.

Industry 4.0 Enablers

- Africa has been **left behind during the past industrial revolutions**, despite its affluent **population and natural resources**.
- Harnessing Industry 4.0 technologies (**Digital twin, AI, robotics, big data, 3D printing, blockchain, etc.**) and overcoming its challenges will **require significant efforts to coordinate**, develop and improve the Industry 4.0 ecosystem in Africa.
- Industrial **sectors are slowly adopting Industry 4.0 concepts**, making them less competitive.

Now it is the time to change

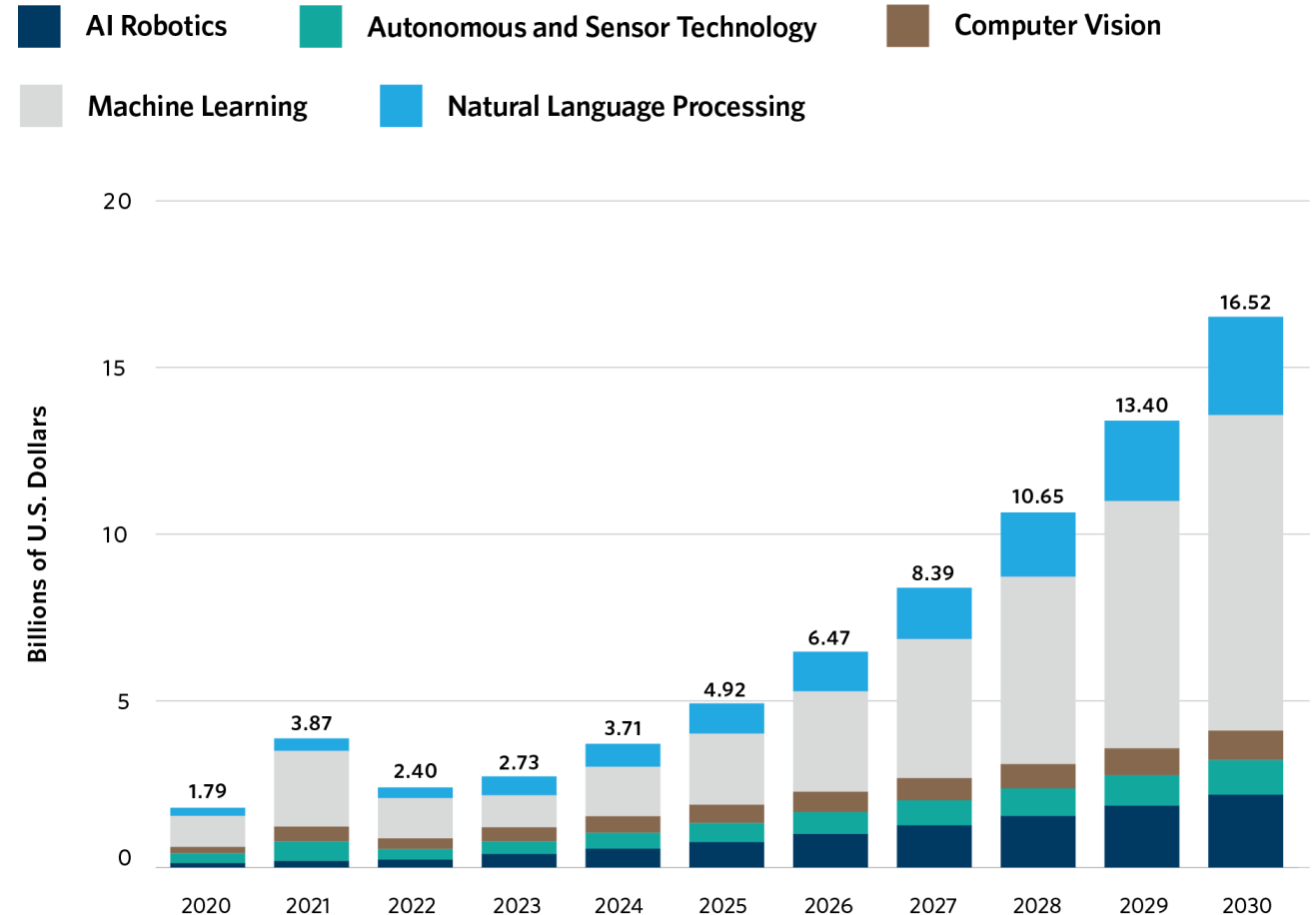
- Fast adoption of industry 4.0 technologies in developed countries **accelerate the gap to African** countries.
- Potential of Industry 4.0 is crucial for **enhancing productivity, employment, sustainability** and paving the path to global values chains.



Fast Industry 4.0 adoption is vital for Africa's Global Competitiveness, Job Creation, and Sustainability

Africa's AI Potential for Growth and Development

- By 2030, **42 percent of the world's youth population** will be Africans and **77 percent** of Africa's population is **under age thirty-five**.
- Africa's **young population is already embracing AI technologies**, and the technology's usage is expected to soar over the next decade.
- Their **awareness and adoption of advanced technologies** is already rivaling figures in Western populations.
- For example, **78 percent of Africans** use AI tools at least weekly, compared to 69 percent in Europe and 60 percent in the United States.
- The direct **AI market in Africa, currently at approximately \$3 billion**, is expected to grow by 28 to 30 percent annually over the next several years, reaching **\$16 to \$18 billion by 2030**.



Source: "Artificial Intelligence - Africa," Statista, accessed August 26, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/tmo/artificial-intelligence/africa>.

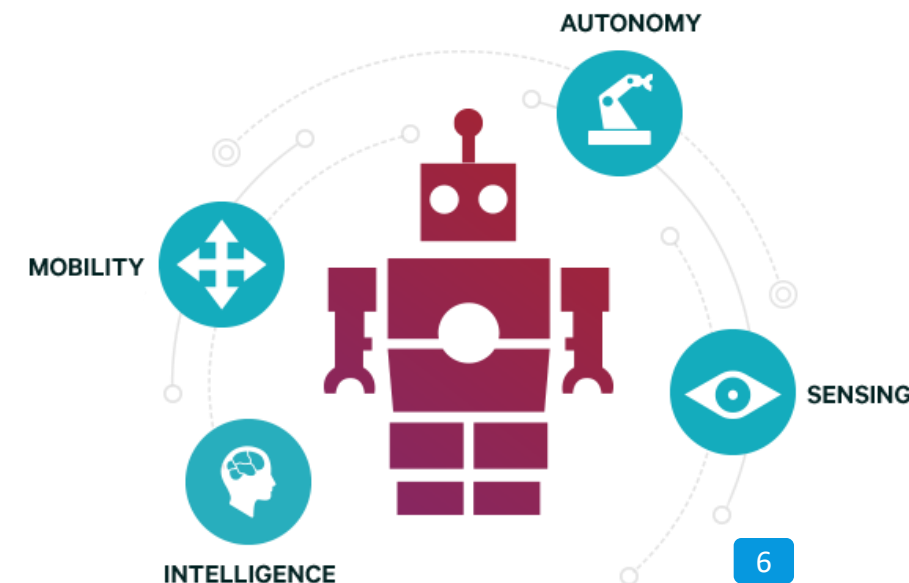
Artificial Intelligence (AI) in East Africa

1. Why AI Matters for East Africa:

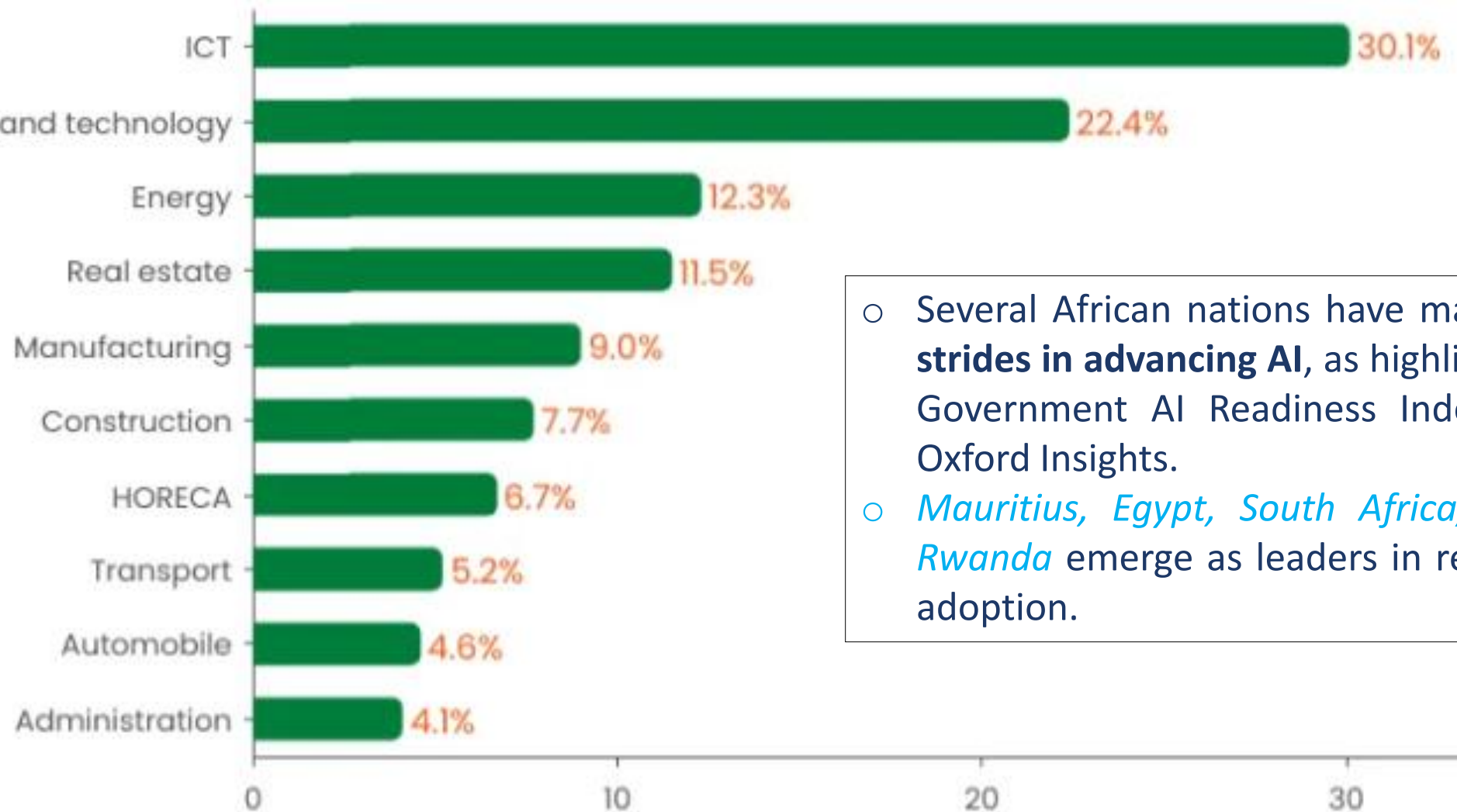
- **Economic Growth:** AI can drive productivity, innovation, and competitiveness across key sectors such as **agriculture, healthcare, finance, and manufacturing.**
- **Societal Impact:** AI can address pressing challenges like **food security, healthcare access, and education** by providing data-driven solutions.
- **Global Competitiveness:** Adopting AI positions East Africa as a hub for **innovation and technology** in Africa, attracting investment and talent.

2. Current State of AI Adoption in East Africa:

- Countries like **Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda** are leading in AI adoption, with initiatives such as Rwanda's National AI Policy and Kenya's AI research hubs.
- Universities and **tech hubs** are increasingly integrating AI into their programs and research.



AI Usage Rate by Sector in Africa



- Several African nations have made **significant strides in advancing AI**, as highlighted by the « Government AI Readiness Index 2023 » by Oxford Insights.
- *Mauritius, Egypt, South Africa, Tunisia, and Rwanda* emerge as leaders in readiness for AI adoption.

Source: World Bank

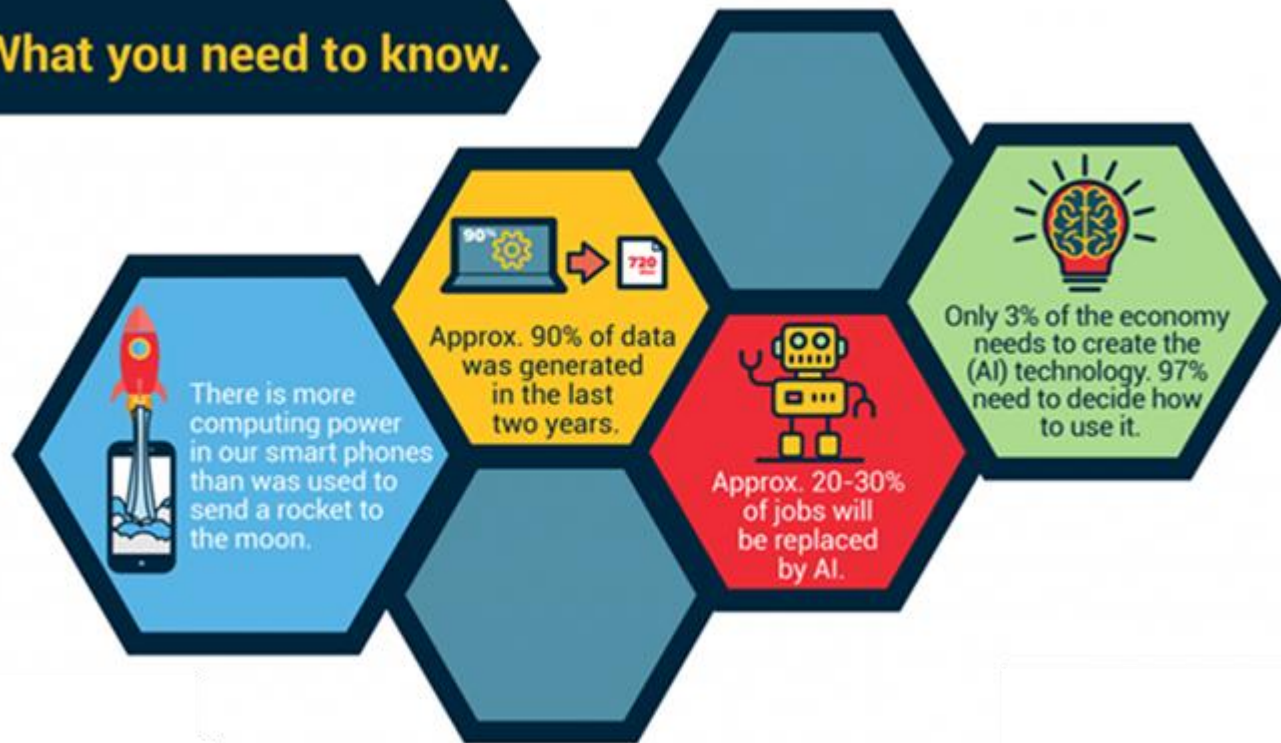
Key Steps for Effective AI Adoption and Implementation

❑ For Universities:

○ *Integrate AI into Curricula:*

- Develop courses and **programs focused on AI**, machine learning, and data science.
- Partner with industry to ensure that **curricula are aligned with market** needs.

AI: What you need to know.



○ *Establish AI Research Labs and Innovation Hubs:*

- Create dedicated spaces for **AI research and experimentation**.
- Equip labs with the necessary **hardware, software**, and datasets.

○ *Collaborate with Industry:*

- Partner with businesses to apply **AI solutions to real-world** problems.
- Engage in joint **research projects and internships** to bridge the gap between academia and industry.

○ *Promote Interdisciplinary Research:*

- Encourage collaboration between **computer science, engineering, business**, and other disciplines to drive innovative AI applications.

Key Steps for Effective AI Adoption and Implementation----Cont'

❑ For Businesses:

◦ *Identify High-Impact Use Cases:*

- Focus on areas where **AI can deliver the most value**, such as customer service, supply chain optimization, and **predictive maintenance**.
- Start with pilot projects to **test AI solutions** before scaling up.

◦ *Invest in AI Infrastructure:*

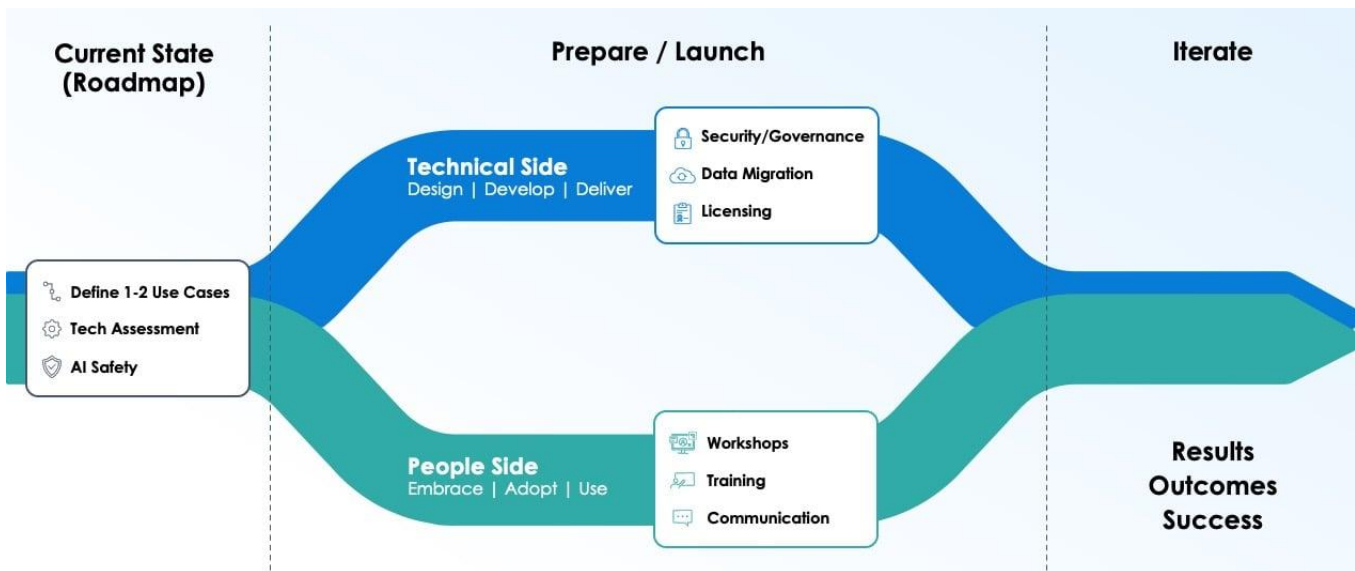
- Build or acquire the necessary **hardware and software** for AI development and deployment.
- Leverage cloud **computing platforms** for scalable AI solutions.

◦ *Develop AI Talent:*

- Train **existing employees in AI** and data science skills.
- Recruit **AI experts and data scientists** to lead AI initiatives.

◦ *Leverage AI for Innovation:*

- Use AI to develop **new products, services, and business models**.
- Explore **emerging AI technologies** such as natural language processing, computer vision, and robotics.



Fostering Collaboration: Academia, Industry, and Government

❑ Role of Academia:

○ *Conducting Cutting-Edge Research:*

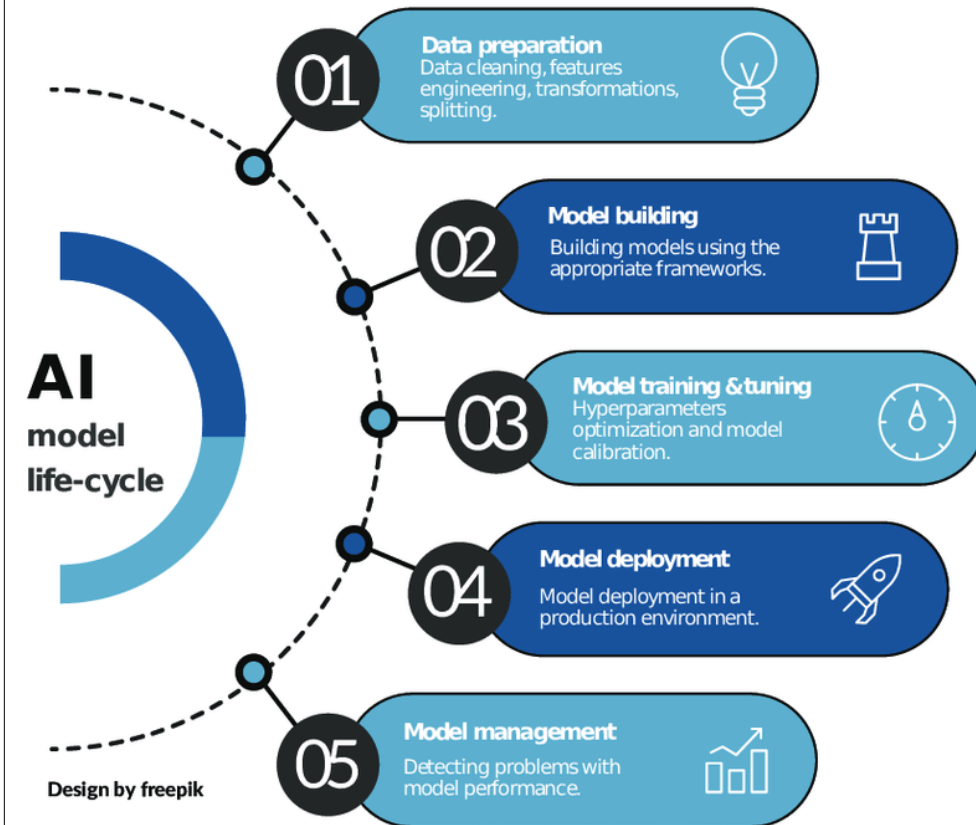
- Universities and research institutions are at the forefront of **AI research, exploring areas** such as machine learning, natural language processing, and robotics.
- Focus on both foundational research (e.g., developing new algorithms) and applied research (e.g., **solving industry-specific problems**).

○ *Developing AI Talent:*

- Offer degree programs, certifications, and **workshops in AI and data science**.
- Partner with industry to provide internships, co-op programs, and **real-world projects for students**.

○ *Establishing Innovation Hubs:*

- Create **centres of excellence** for AI research and innovation, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and resources.
- Encourage **interdisciplinary collaboration** between computer science, engineering, business, and other fields.



Fostering Collaboration -----Cont'

❑ Role of Industry:

○ *Providing Real-World Data and Insights:*

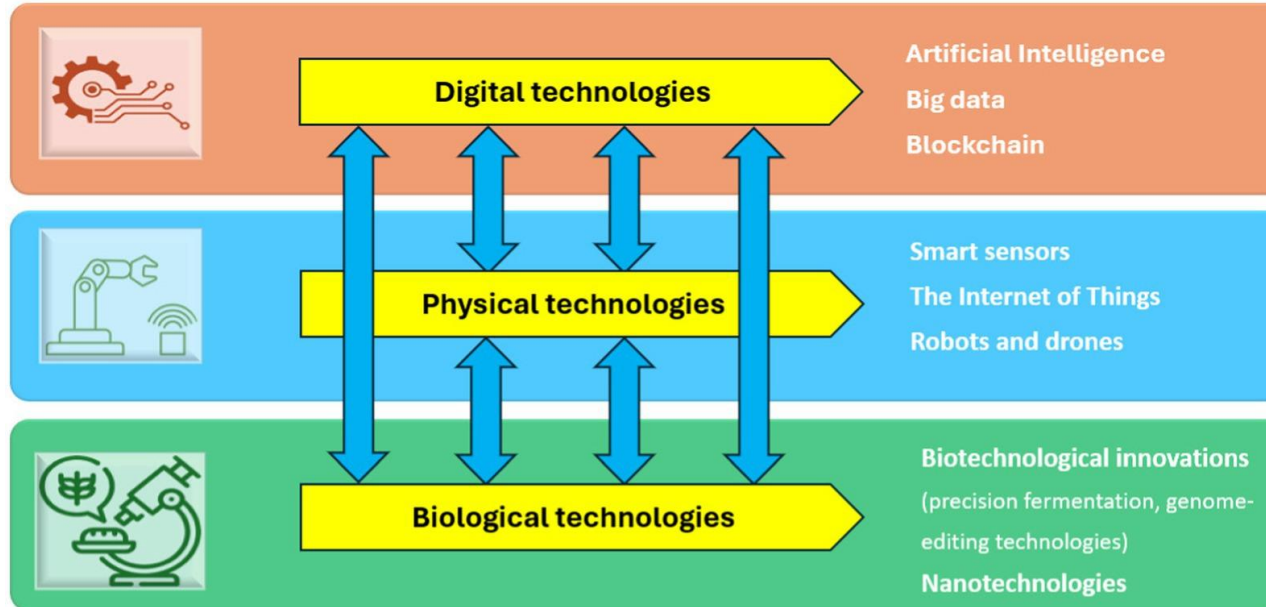
- Industry partners can share data and domain expertise to guide AI research and ensure its **relevance to real-world challenges**.
- Collaborate with academia to **develop AI solutions for specific use cases**, such as **predictive maintenance**, **customer segmentation**, or **supply chain optimization**.

○ *Funding and Investment:*

- Industry can provide funding for **AI research projects**, startups, and innovation hubs.
- **Invest in AI infrastructure**, such as cloud computing platforms and data centres, to support research and development.

○ *Commercializing AI Innovations:*

- Work with universities to **bring AI research to market**, creating new products, services, and business models.
- Support the growth of **AI startups through mentorship**, funding, and partnerships.



Fostering Collaboration -----Cont'

❑ Role of Government:

○ *Creating Supportive Policies and Frameworks:*

- Develop national AI strategies and **policies that promote research**, innovation, and ethical AI development.
- Provide funding and **incentives for AI projects**, startups, and research institutions.

Government as an Enabler of the AI Environment

Innovation

Data

Infrastructure

Skills

Government as a User of AI

Vision

Technology

Skills

Data

AI Ethics

Safety

Transparency

Accountability

Inclusivity

○ *Building Infrastructure:*

- Invest in **high-speed internet**, data centres, and cloud computing infrastructure to enable AI research and deployment.
- Support the development of **AI innovation hubs and technology parks**.

○ *Promoting Collaboration:*

- Facilitate **partnerships between academia, industry, and government** through initiatives such as **public-private partnerships (PPPs) and innovation challenges**.
- Create platforms for **knowledge sharing and networking**, such as conferences, workshops, and online portals.

Key AI Success Stories in East Africa

a. Agriculture:

- **Twiga Foods (Kenya):** Improved income for farmers, reduced food prices for consumers, and minimized post-harvest losses.
- **Hello Tractor (Kenya):** Increased agricultural productivity and reduced labor costs for smallholder farmers.

b. Healthcare:

- **Babylon Health (Rwanda):** Improved access to healthcare, especially in rural areas, and reduced pressure on healthcare facilities.
- **Zipline (Rwanda):** Faster and more reliable delivery of critical medical supplies, saving lives in emergencies.

c. Finance:

- **M-Pesa (Kenya):** Increased financial inclusion, with millions of users accessing banking services for the first time.
- **Tala (Kenya):** Access to credit for underserved populations, enabling small businesses to grow and thrive.

d. Transportation:

- **SafeMotos (Rwanda):** Reduced accidents and improved safety for passengers.
- **Ampersand (Rwanda):** Reduced emissions and lower operating costs for motorcycle taxi drivers.



Ethical AI Development and Deployment

Bias and Fairness:

- Biased AI in hiring processes that favour certain demographics over others.

b. Privacy and Data Security:

- Unauthorized use of personal data for AI training or decision-making.

c. Transparency and Explainability:

- A loan application rejected by an AI system without a clear explanation.

d. Accountability and Responsibility:

- An autonomous vehicle causing an accident—who is liable?

e. Societal Impact:

- Automation leading to job losses in certain sectors.

Objects Labels Logos Web Properties Safe Search



Screenshot from 2020-04-03 09-51-57.png

Hand	77%
Gun	61%

Objects Labels Web Properties Safe Search



Screenshot from 2020-04-02 11-51-45.png

Hand	72%
Monocular	60%

According to Google's Vision AI in 2020



Virtual Mechatronics Labs – Current Partnership Projects with Industries

Human-Robot Collaboration (HRC)

- By integrating **AI-powered tool recognition**, deep learning-driven object detection, and **AR-enhanced instructional systems**, HRC is minimizing errors, accelerating production times, and optimizing human-machine interactions.
- Additionally, **Digital Twin simulations** provide real-time predictive analytics, enabling **adaptive learning** and **continuous process optimization**.



SIEMENS **FESTO**



This synergy is transforming intelligent manufacturing, ensuring robots and workers collaborate with **unparalleled accuracy, safety, and efficiency**.

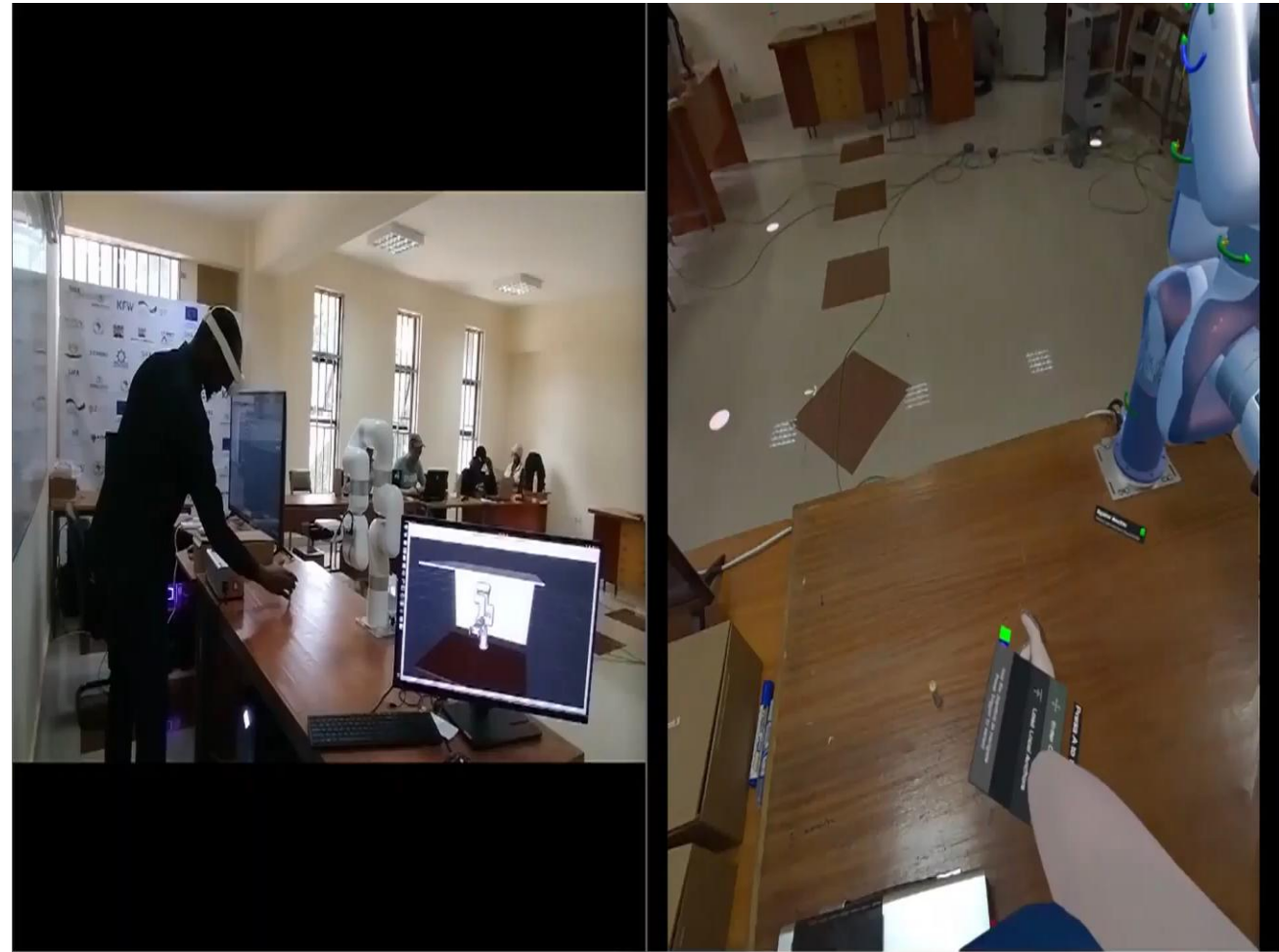
Current Partnership Projects with Industries-----Cont'

Human-Robot Collaboration (HRC)

- The manufacturing industry is undergoing a paradigm shift with the integration of HRC, driven by advances in *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*, *Virtual Reality (VR)*, *Augmented Reality (AR)* and, *Digital Twin (DT)* technologies.
- These innovations in the **Virtual Mechatronics Labs** are making robots more *adaptive, safer, and smarter*, fundamentally transforming production processes and workforce dynamics.



SIEMENS **FESTO**



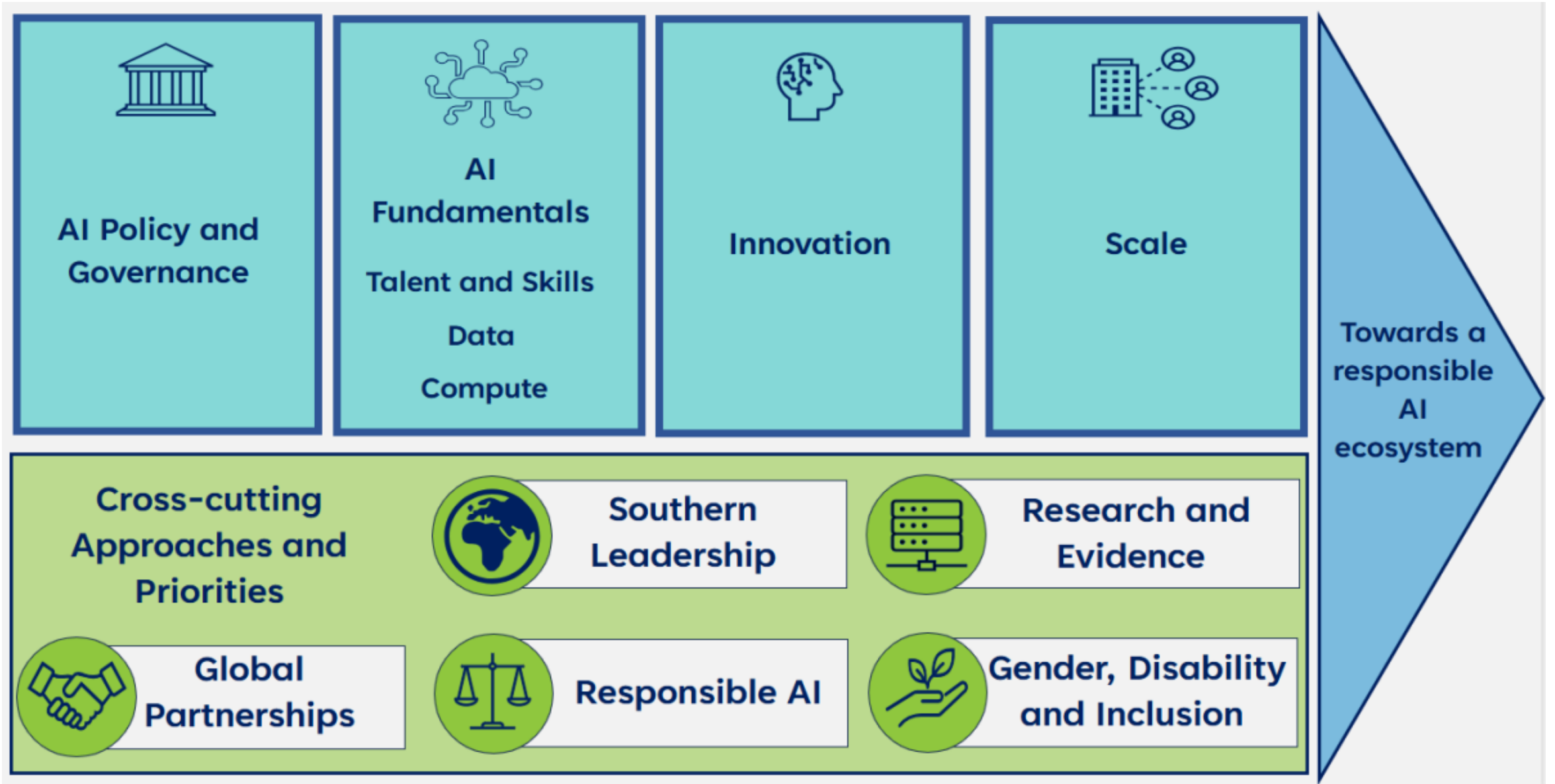
This is *AI-powered human-robot collaboration frameworks* for smart factories to *enhance workplace safety* by using AI to *predict potential collisions* and improve *robot adaptability*.

Download VML Solutions Here

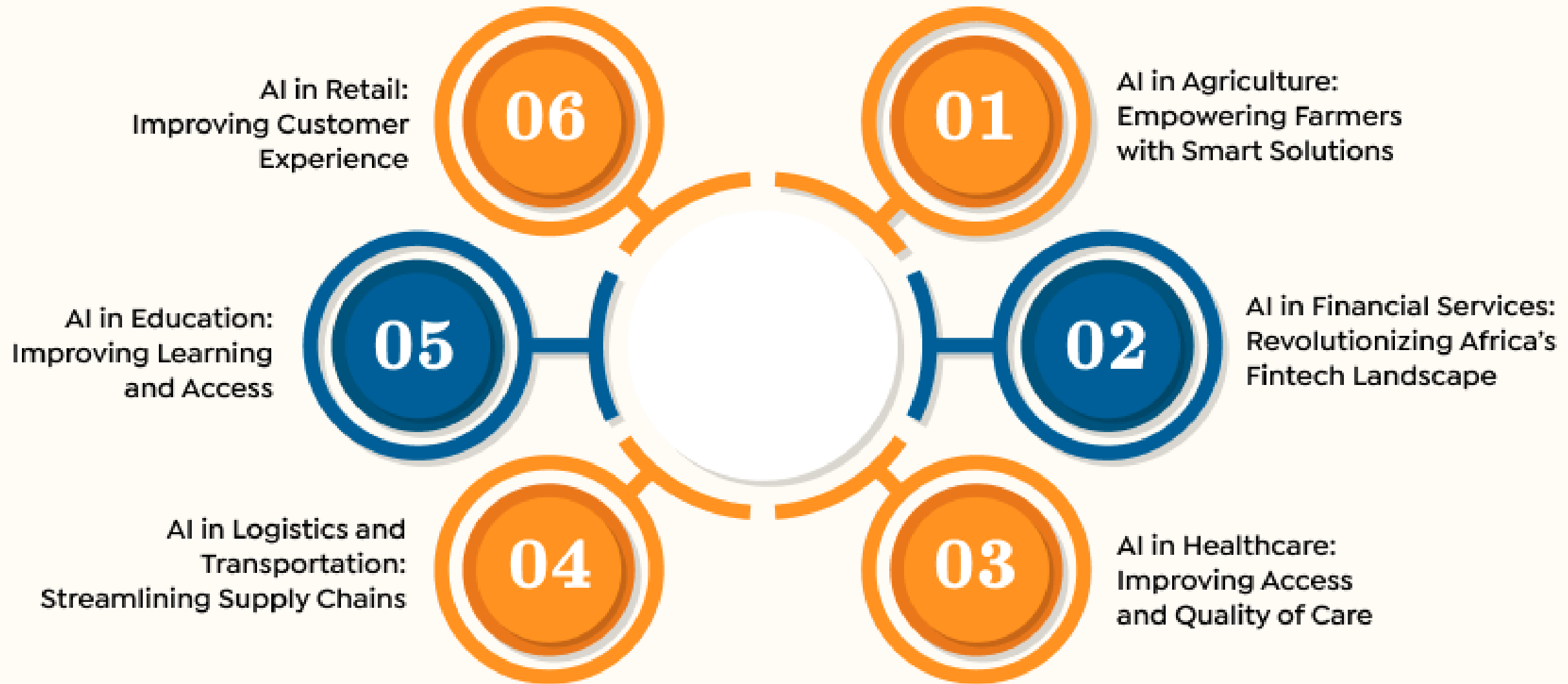
Key Challenges in AI Adoption in East Africa



Strategies to Overcome Challenges



Key Recommendations for Advancing AI in East Africa

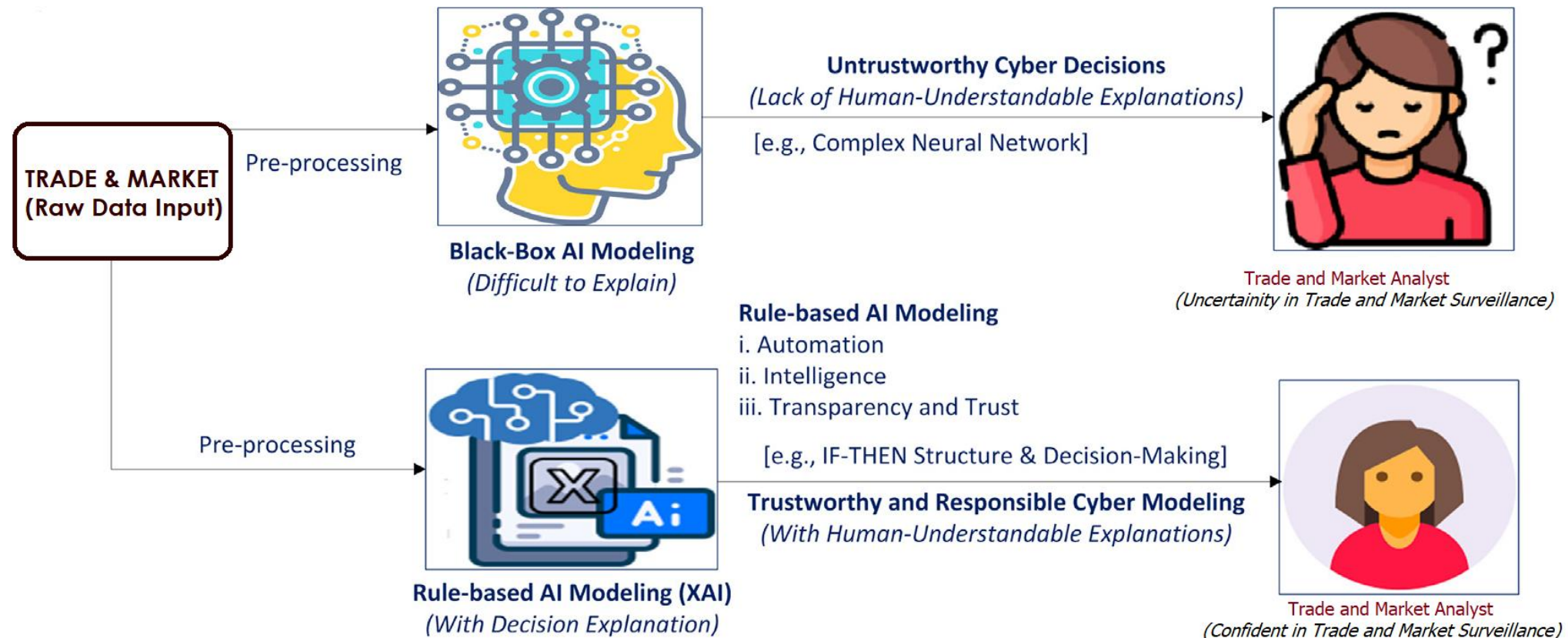


Key Recommendations for Advancing AI in East Africa-----Cont'

❑ RULE-BASED AI MODELING SOLUTIONS

- There are various techniques including **machine learning and data science processes** to discover this knowledge and relationships.

- To make a decision in a certain situation, a rule is typically structured and generated as **“IF [‘antecedent’] => THEN [‘consequent’]”** statement, where **“antecedent”** represents necessary trade and market attributes, conditions or contextual situations, and **“consequent”** represents the corresponding action. <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/5308293>



Conclusion

❑ Recap of Key Insights:

- AI has the potential to drive *innovation, economic growth, and societal transformation* in East Africa.
- The session explored how *universities, businesses, and governments can effectively adopt and implement AI solutions*, foster collaboration, and address ethical challenges.
- Success stories from *East Africa demonstrate the transformative impact of AI* in sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, finance, and transportation.

❑ Vision for the Future:

- By working together, *East Africa can create a vibrant AI ecosystem* that drives innovation, economic growth, and societal transformation.
- AI has the potential to *address pressing challenges, create new opportunities*, and position East Africa as a leader in AI innovation on the global stage.
- Let's seize this opportunity to *build a sustainable and inclusive future* powered by AI.

Thank
you