# Call for evidence synthesis paper
## *on Digital Skills for Youth Employment in Africa*

As part of the '**Boosting decent employment for Africa's youth**' research initiative, the Dutch Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies (INCLUDE), in partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), under the aegis of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, will commission an Evidence Synthesis Paper (ESP) on Digital Skills for Youth Employment in Africa. This ESP is intended to strengthen the evidence base around digital skills and youth employment and provide insights for policy and practice on youth employment strategies in Africa.

Advancements in digitalization are transforming the world of work, notably in terms of the types of skills required for the labour market (Brown & Slater, 2018; Hayward, 2020; Kazimierczuk, 2020). Most industries, including financial services, health, entertainment, transportation and, of course, information and communication technology (ICT), increasingly require digital skills (being able to work online; some basic coding skills) and digital literacy (to work critically and safely with online content) in workplaces around the world (MFA, 2019; ITU, 2014). In fact, in Sub-Saharan Africa alone an estimated 230 million jobs will require digital skills within the next decade (IFC 2019). While digital skills for youth employment was already a focus of public and private sector policies in past years (UNICEF 2019), the pandemic accelerated the transition into digital jobs, expanding market opportunities of the digital economy (ILO 2020). A survey of respondents in 15 countries (McKinsey 2021) identified over 50 skills that next generations will need to successfully and actively participate in the digital future.

However, context matters greatly in defining what skills are determinant for youths to find employment in the digital economy of different countries or regions of the African continent. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze evidence on the challenges and opportunities that digital skills offer for youth employment, with specific reference to countries-specificities.

In addition, it is important to take a gender lens. For instance, a recent survey[1] in 33 countries investigates how misinformation and disinformation online affects the lives, learning and leadership of girls and young women. Results showed that 7 out of 10 young women had not learned how to spot misinformation or disinformation and a majority did not trust a single online source. Moreover, 9 out of 10 had been harmed by misinformation. The report therefore recommends to improve digital literacy in particular for girls.

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[1] The 2021 Report on the State of the World's Girls, Plan International. The Truth Gap | Plan International (plan-international.org)

The evidence synthesis paper under this theme should consider the following research questions, with reference to the African continent:

- How is digital literacy distributed across the continent? And across youth groups (e.g. gender, socio-economic classes, rural/urban)?
- What are the factors that influence digital literacy of young women and men? The answer to this question should be illustrated with evidence from case studies
- What skills (soft and hard) do young women and men need in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution?
- How can public education systems in Africa further digital literacy and digital skills sustainably, for young women and men? In particular, what role should TVET play?
- How can the private sector play a role in the development of digital skills among youth?
- How has COVID changed the digital skills for youth landscape (challenges, opportunities, inclusiveness)? In particular, (how) has this increased the digital divide (e.g. between rural and urban youths or between young men and women) because of accessibility to internet, distance learning or school closures?

It is greatly encouraged to foresee country case studies to illustrate African-wide findings: in this way, there should be a balance between generalizable continent-wide conclusions, with context-sensitive evidence.

## Required format of the proposal

Proposals for evidence synthesis papers should provide a sufficiently detailed summary with a preliminary outline of the proposed paper that will clearly indicate knowledge of the topic and the direction the author(s) plan to undertake. It should contain the following information:

- Name and affiliation of the author(s)
- An abstract (max 250 words)
- A sufficiently detailed summary of the proposed paper (max 1,000 words)
- A preliminary outline of the proposed paper with a short elaboration on the relevance of each of the proposed sections
- A short note on the proposed methodological approach (max 100 words)
- The policy relevance and potential impact of the synthesis
- An overview of related review papers and selected references
- Possible country case studies
- Annexes:
  - Budget for a max of 15000 € including editing costs and VAT
  - Short two-page CV(s) and list of major publications of the author(s)
  - General statement by the applicant that he or she endorses and follows the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which is aimed at strengthening data protection for all individuals within the European Union. In the Netherlands the regulation is implemented as the 'Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming (AVG)'.

## Submission and selection process

Proposals must be submitted in English or French via email to siri@thebrokeronline.eu by 17 January 2022. Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered. Submitted proposals will be reviewed by the selection committee, comprised of representatives of INCLUDE, IDRC and ILO.

Criteria for the evaluation of proposals include:

- Relevance of the proposal to the themes of this call
- Structure and coverage of the synthesis
- Clear and appropriate methodological approach including gender considerations
- Research extension and policy relevance
- Qualifications and relevant experience of the author(s)

Successful applicants will be notified by 24 January 2022. After a proposal is approved by the selection committee, the author(s) are invited to submit the synthesis paper along the lines of the proposal within six months.

## Timeline

- Deadline for submission of completed application 17 January, 2022
- Successful applicant(s) informed by 24 January, 2022
- Draft synthesis paper by 1 June 2022 (feedback within 2 weeks)
- Final synthesis paper by 1 August 2022

All evidence synthesis papers in this series will be published under a Creative Commons Attribution-International (CC BY), version 4.0. 8.

## Permission for use and disclosure of information

By way of submitting an application under this call for synthesis papers, the applicant consents to the disclosure of the documents submitted by the applicant to the reviewers involved in the selection process, both within INCLUDE and externally. The applicant further consents to the disclosure of the name of the applicant/lead researcher in any announcement about the selection of proposals or other INCLUDE supported activities.

## Contact
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