



AI and Automation: Protecting Low-Income Workers

Policy frameworks to protect low-income workers from job displacement caused by artificial intelligence and automation

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What we will cover

- 1 Why this matters for Namibia now
- 2 What the evidence says about AI and jobs
- 3 Who is most at risk
- 4 Namibia's labour market picture
- 5 A five-pillar policy framework
- 6 Namibia's building blocks and who does what
- 7 How ITU can support, roadmap and key messages

Why this matters for Namibia now

AI is arriving – the question is who benefits



National AI Institute

Launched at NCRST in September 2026, with centres for software, datasets, innovation and research [9]



A voice at the global table

Namibia is one of eight African members of the ITU AI for Good Global Commission, launched July 2026 [9]



Jobs are the top concern

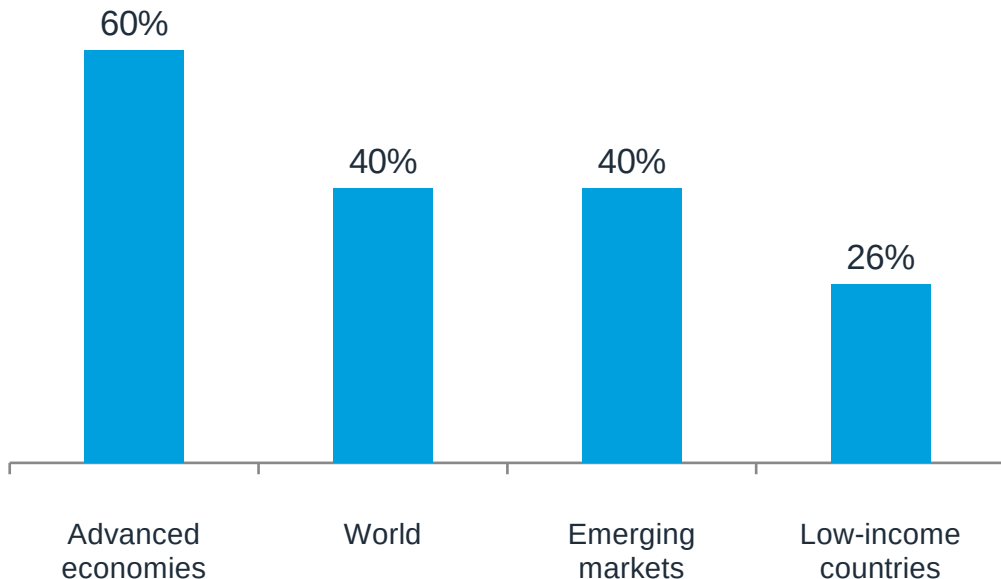
Youth unemployment is 44.4%; young Namibians rank unemployment as the most urgent problem [6][7]

The question is not whether AI comes to Namibia – it is who benefits, and who is protected.

Source: [6] NSA, 2023 Census Labour Force Report; [7] Afrobarometer AD1187 (2026); [9] New Era and The Namibian (September 2026)

How many jobs are exposed to AI?

Share of employment exposed to AI, by country group



What "exposed" means

- AI can do some of the tasks in the job
- About half of exposed jobs may gain from AI; others may shrink
- Lower exposure in poorer countries also means fewer gains, and a risk of falling further behind

Source: [1] IMF (2024), *Gen-AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work*

Exposure is not the same as job loss

Most jobs will change, not disappear – but some are at high risk

1 in 4

workers worldwide are in jobs with some exposure to generative AI

Source [2]

3.3%

of global jobs are in the highest-risk group for automation

Source [2]

4.7% vs 2.4%

of women's vs men's jobs worldwide are in the highest-risk group

Source [2]

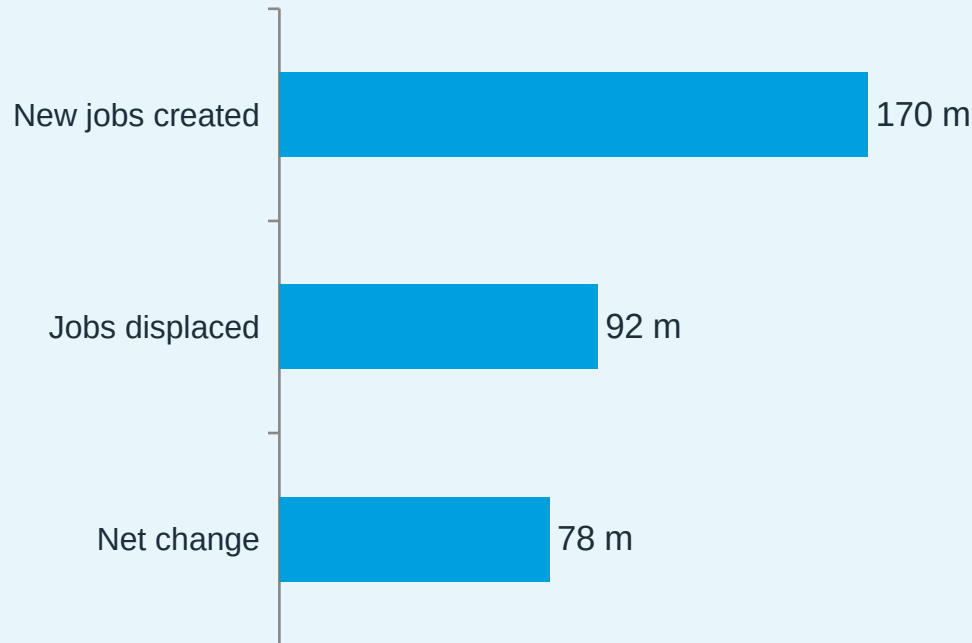
Key message: few jobs can be fully automated today. The main effect is job transformation – which can still hurt workers who are not prepared.

Source: [2] ILO and NASK (2025), *Generative AI and Jobs: A Refined Global Index of Occupational Exposure*

Jobs will be created and destroyed at the same time



Global employer outlook, 2025–2030



39%

of key job skills are expected to change by 2030 [3]

The risk

The people who lose jobs are often not the people who get the new ones.

Source: [3] World Economic Forum (2025), *Future of Jobs Report 2025*

Who is most at risk?

Risk is highest where exposure meets low income and weak protection



Clerical & admin workers

The most exposed group: data entry, typists, bookkeeping clerks, call-centre staff [2]



Women

Over-represented in clerical and customer-facing jobs [2]



Young people

44.4% youth unemployment; 41.9% of 15-24s are not in education, work or training [6]



Older workers

May find it harder to adapt and retrain [1]



Outsourced service jobs

AI can do tasks once outsourced to lower-wage countries, closing a route to development [2]



Informal & low-paid workers

Little savings, no unemployment insurance, few training options



Rural communities

Less connectivity and training, so less chance to use AI to their benefit

Source: [1] IMF (2024); [2] ILO and NASK (2025); [6] NSA, 2023 Census Labour Force Report

Namibia's labour market today

Many workers already have little room to absorb a shock

36.9%

unemployment rate
(2023)

Source [6]

44.4%

youth unemployment
rate (2023)

Source [6]

55.4%

of employed Namibians
earn under N\$5,000 a
month

Source [6]

41.9%

of youth aged 15–24 are
not in education,
employment or training

Source [6]

Exposed sectors to watch: administration and support services employ 9.3% of workers; wholesale and retail 10%; elementary occupations 21.8% [6]. These are where automation and AI tools will be felt first or fastest.

Source: [6] Namibia Statistics Agency, 2023 Population and Housing Census Labour Force Report (released January 2025)

Two sides of the same technology

Risks for low-income workers

- Tasks in admin, retail and call centres automated
- Algorithms used to hire, monitor and pay workers unfairly
- Gains go to firms and highly skilled workers only
- Wider gaps between urban and rural, men and women

Opportunities if we act

- AI tools that raise productivity of small farmers and traders
- Better public services: health, education, social grants
- New jobs in data, AI support, digital services and green tech
- Local AI built on Namibian data and languages

A five-pillar policy framework

To protect low-income workers while capturing the benefits of AI



1. Anticipate

See the change coming



2. Skill

Reskill and upskill for all



3. Protect

Strong social protection



4. Govern

Worker-centred AI rules



5. Share

Spread the gains widely

Pillar 1: Anticipate the change

Good data first



We cannot protect workers from changes we cannot see.

- Map which Namibian occupations are most exposed to AI, using national labour data
- Add questions on technology use and informal work to future Labour Force Surveys
- Set up an early-warning dialogue with employers on planned automation
- Track results by gender, age and region

Pillar 2: Skill and reskill

Lifelong learning for the jobs that are coming



Skills are the best protection –
but they must reach low-income
workers, not only graduates.

- Basic AI literacy for all workers and students
- Short, practical reskilling for clerical, retail and call-centre workers
- Modernise TVET and university courses with employers
- Paid training time or learning vouchers for low-income workers
- Build on NCRST AI training – about 2,000 students already reached [9]

Source: [9] New Era (September 2026), on the National AI Institute launch

Pillar 3: Protect workers in transition

A safety net that moves with the worker



Only 52.4% of people worldwide have at least one social protection benefit [4].

- Extend social protection floors to informal and gig workers
- Unemployment support linked to retraining
- Portable benefits that follow workers between jobs and platforms
- Transition support for regions or sectors hit by automation
- Use digital ID and payments to deliver support quickly and fairly

Source: [4] ILO (2024), *World Social Protection Report 2024–26*

Pillar 4: Govern AI with workers in mind

Rules that build trust



AI rules should protect people,
not only data and markets.

- Assess the impact on jobs before AI is used in public services
- Transparency when AI is used to hire, monitor, rate or pay workers
- A human must review important decisions about workers
- Strong data protection and a right to explanation
- Social dialogue: government, employers and workers decide together

Source: African Union (2024), Continental AI Strategy; UNESCO (2025), AI Readiness Assessment Report: Namibia

Pillar 5: Share the gains

Make AI work for inclusive growth



The goal is AI that helps workers do more – not AI that simply replaces them.

- Incentives for firms that use AI to support workers rather than replace them
- Help small businesses and farmers adopt affordable AI tools
- Use public procurement to favour local AI firms and jobs
- Connect rural areas so everyone can take part
- Invest in local data and languages so AI serves all Namibians

Namibia's building blocks

A strong base to build a worker-centred AI policy



NDP6

Economic diversification and youth empowerment [7]



National Digital Strategy 2025–2028

Provides for the National AI Institute [9]



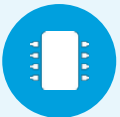
National AI Institute

Four centres: software, datasets, AI innovation, R&D [9]



AI Readiness Assessment

UNESCO assessment report for Namibia (2025) [8]



Computing capacity

High-performance computing centres at NUST and UNAM [9]



Global voice

Member of the ITU AI for Good Global Commission [9]

Source: [7] Afrobarometer AD1187 (2026); [8] UNESCO (2025); [9] New Era and The Namibian (September 2026)

Who does what?

A shared responsibility

Actor	Key role in protecting workers
Government (MICT, Labour, Education, Finance)	Policy, social protection, skills funding, AI rules for the public sector
Regulators (CRAN, data protection)	Fair and safe AI use, consumer and data protection
Employers and industry	Plan changes early, retrain staff, use AI to support workers
Workers and unions	Take part in social dialogue on how AI is used at work
Universities, TVET, NCRST	Update courses, research, AI training for all
Partners (ITU, UN, donors)	Technical support, standards, capacity building, funding

How ITU can support Namibia

Working through the ITU Area Office for Southern Africa: three pillars of support



Policy and regulation

Help Namibia set the framework and institutions for worker-centred AI

- **AI for Good** – global platform, with Namibia on its Global Commission
- **AI standards** – safe and trusted AI
- **Collaborative AI Framework and Preparedness Diagnostic**
- **AI policy and regulatory advisory**
- **ICT Regulatory Tracker, G5 benchmark and Digital Regulation Platform**



Infrastructure and data

Help build and use AI for public services

- **Giga** – connecting schools so every learner can gain AI skills
- **Data and indicators** – ICT and digital skills statistics to track progress
- **GENIE.AI** – open-source AI for digital public services
- **DataHub and DataHub AI**
- **Broadband maps and connectivity planning tools**



Skills

Build the people who design, regulate and use AI

- **ITU Academy and AI Skills Coalition** – AI and digital skills for officials, teachers and youth
- **Digital Transformation Centres** – community-level digital skills training
- **Training for policymakers and regulators**
- **GENIE.AI training and hackathons**

A possible roadmap

Suggested steps – to be shaped with national partners

Next 12 months

1–3 years

By 2030

- Map AI exposure of Namibian jobs
- Put worker protection into the AI policy
- Launch AI literacy for workers

- Scale reskilling for at-risk workers
- Extend social protection to informal workers
- Set rules for AI at work

- Every worker able to learn AI skills
- A safety net for all in transition
- AI adding jobs, not only replacing them

Key messages

1

Act before the shock

Map the risks now and plan with employers and workers.

2

Put people first

Skills and social protection must reach low-income and informal workers.

3

Shape AI, don't just adopt it

Build worker protection into Namibia's AI policy from day one.

Sources (1 of 2)

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- [7] Afrobarometer (2026). Dispatch AD1187: Namibian youth identify unemployment as the country's most urgent problem. www.afrobarometer.org
- [8] UNESCO (2025). Artificial Intelligence Readiness Assessment Report: Namibia. unesdoc.unesco.org
- [9] New Era, "NCRST opens National AI Institute" and "AI to boost digital services: Theofelus"; The Namibian, "National AI Institute launched" (September 2026)



Thank you

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