



Women Leading

the AI revolution in Africa





Women are breaking barriers in several spheres of life, artificial intelligence (AI) included. In celebration of International Women's Day (IWD), we would like to recognise the remarkable women who are defying conventions, challenging norms and driving change in a largely male-dominated sphere in Africa.

The visionary individuals highlighted in this IWD special feature are the data scientists dissecting complex problems while championing for inclusivity in AI, the computer scientists developing innovative software for businesses, innovators who are empowering and making it easier for Africans to earn a livelihood while also empowering the next wave of female AI enthusiasts. They are not just making strides; they are paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse AI.

Join us as we spotlight the voices of these exceptional women highlighting their achievements, sharing their insights and celebrating their invaluable contributions to the AI revolution in Africa.

Here's a glimpse into the extraordinary world of Women Leading the AI Revolution in Africa.



Immaculate Kassait

Immaculate Kassait is Kenya's first Data Commissioner. In this role, she remains firmly in the driving seat, providing the oversight and policy guidance needed to deepen the value of AI in Kenya and ensure that the solutions provide a human good for national development.

Immaculate has extensive experience in elections, governance and women's rights and has played a key role in establishing several projects in Kenya and abroad.

Before she was appointed the data commissioner, she worked at the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, serving as the first female in charge of Voter Registration Elections and Operations from 2010 to 2020. She served as the Chairperson of the Taskforce on Development of the Data Protection Regulations, 2021.

She is among the two Building Resources in Democracy in Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) accrediting experts in Kenya. In 2021, she was recognised amongst the top 25 women in digital media in Kenya. She is decorated with the Moran of the Burning Spear (MBS) Presidential Award for her outstanding work in public service, and she continues to take part in several philanthropy activities as part of her community work.

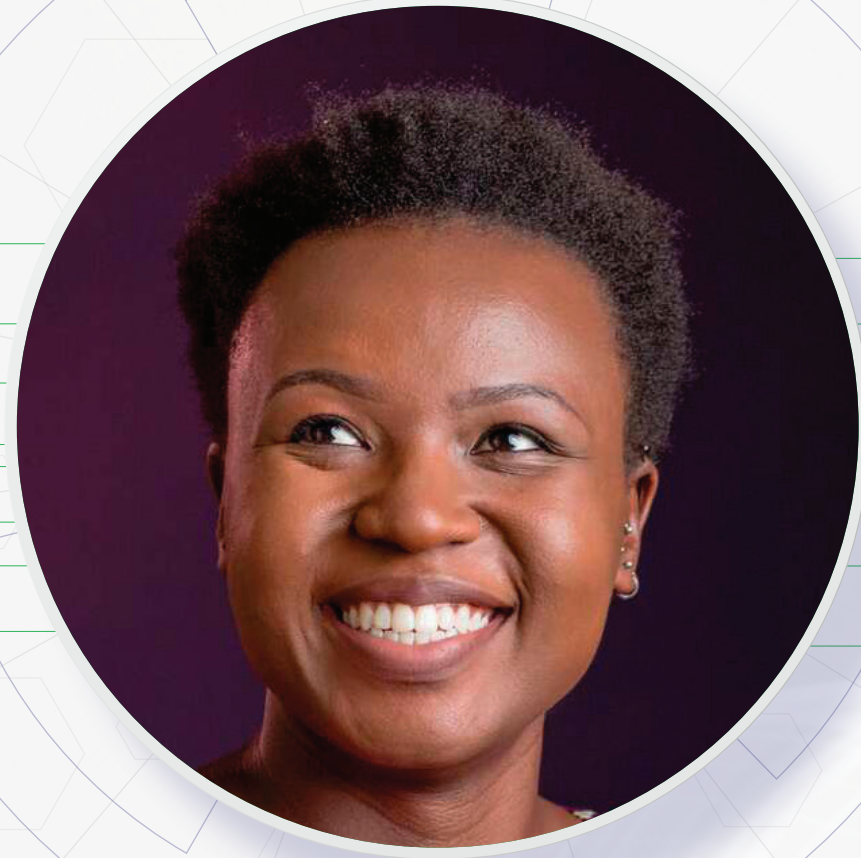


Annepeace Alwala

Annepeace Alwala is the Vice President for Global Service Delivery at Sama. She has a wide expertise in customer experience process design and implementation, customer journey mapping and service recovery. She has in-depth knowledge in contact center set up and operations cutting across quality, operations, Training, MIS, Human resources and technology having managed this in 8 African countries.

Annepeace is experienced in voice of the customer survey design, result root cause analysis and actions to improve customer's experience. Conversant with design and implementation of NPS, CSAT, CES and CIS surveys. She is passionate about people which is one of the reasons she excels in her position as Sama's VP for Global Service Delivery.

Prior to working at SAMA, Annepeace served as the Head of Customer Care at Multichoice Group.



Kathleen Siminyu

Kathleen Siminyu is an AI researcher focused on natural language processing for African languages. She works at the Mozilla Foundation as a Machine Learning Fellow to support the development of a Kiswahili Common Voice dataset and to build speech transcription models for end-use cases in the agricultural and financial domains.

In her NLP research, Kathleen has previously worked on speech transcription for different dialects of the Luhya language and contributed to machine translation for Kenyan languages as part of Masakhane. Before joining Mozilla, Kathleen was the Regional Coordinator of AI4D Africa, where she worked with ML and AI communities in Africa to run various programs.



Muthoni Wanyoike

Muthoni Wanyoike aptly describes herself as an AI Visionary—a visionary transforming ideas into intelligent solutions. She is the visionary who founded AI and Insights and has previously served at Instadeep and Africa's Talking.

Muthoni hardly shies away from expressing her excitement and optimism about the opportunities that AI promises to create in automation and acceleration of existing systems to ensure precision design and optimise gains.

Her excitement in AI is borne out of her commitment to elevate possibilities in AI. She sums it up thus: "As a seasoned AI visionary, I specialise in transforming complex ideas and concepts into innovative solutions. With a passion for driving advancements in artificial intelligence and a proven track record in developing cutting-edge products, my goal is to continue pushing the boundaries of what's possible in the world of artificial intelligence."



Rose Delilah Gesicho

Rose Delilah Gesicho is a Data Science Community Manager at Zindi, a professional network for data science on a mission to make data science and AI accessible to everyone. She is an experienced data scientist with a strong data mining, machine learning, and data visualisation background.

“With a deep understanding of business analytics and excellent problem-solving skills, I am able to identify key insights and trends in data to inform strategic decision-making. In addition to my technical expertise, I am also a highly collaborative team player and am comfortable leading and mentoring others,” she affirms.

Rose has a strong track record of building and managing successful teams as a data science community coordinator and AI program manager and is committed to helping others grow and succeed. She adds: “I am always seeking new opportunities to learn and grow, and I am excited to bring my skills and experience to a dynamic and forward-thinking organisation.”



Harriet Nyanchama Ocharo

Harriet Nyanchama Ocharo is a research scientist based at Hitachi in Tokyo, Japan. Her interests lie in Applied AI Research: the deployment of machine learning algorithms to real-world systems, noting that the constraints in the experimental setup are different from those in the real world.

Harriet also has experience with; machine learning models for regression, clustering, classification and deep learning. The research scientist has hands-on experience with machine learning tools and libraries such as Jupyter Notebooks, sci-kit-learn, Keras, TensorFlow, LIBSVM and supporting tools like mlFlow, Kedro, and container technology.



Dina Machuve

Dina is the co-founder and Chief Technology Officer of DevData Analytics. She utilises her machine learning and computer vision expertise, honed at the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (NM-AIST), to revolutionise disease detection and food processing within the agricultural sector.



Neema Mduma

Dr. Neema Mduma is a lecturer at NM-AIST. With a PhD in Machine Learning, she focuses on educational opportunities, especially for girls. Her notable work includes the AI-powered BakiShule model designed to prevent student dropout.

Dr. Mduma's expertise has earned her awards like the L'Oréal-UNESCO for Women in Science as a Young Talent in Sub-Saharan Africa. She's presented her findings at prestigious AI events globally, including Women in Machine Learning and Black in AI workshops. As a Principal Investigator on various AI-related projects, Dr. Mduma continues to shape the field of machine learning and its educational applications.



Rebecca Ryakitimbo

Rebecca is a skilled technologist, researcher, and policy advocate with a passion for addressing community challenges using technology. As a fellow with MANRS, Mozilla, and other notable organisations, her work centres on leveraging technology solutions within digital policy frameworks.

With expertise in artificial intelligence and community networks, she applies her knowledge through projects like WildNET, where she oversees the deployment of wireless networks and monitoring systems powered by citizen science.



Rebecca Beldon Chaula

Rebecca is an ICT Officer at the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS). She co-founded the university's Emerging Technology Healthcare Laboratory.

Rebecca's experience includes co-leading the creation of machine learning datasets for improved rabies-related healthcare outcomes. Currently, she contributes to AI projects focused on tuberculosis screening for people living with HIV and the early detection of dilated cardiomyopathy.



Clarisse Iribagiza

Clarisse is a computer scientist and entrepreneur. She is the CEO and co-founder of HeHe Limited, a company that develops innovative software that enables businesses to optimise their operations and reach more customers everywhere.

In 2015, she was listed in the Forbes Africa Under 30 ranking. Her company is today the largest e-commerce company in Rwanda, digitising more than 200 companies and serving more than 2 million customers.



Theofrida Maginga

Theofrida is the brains behind Mkulima GPT, a ChatGPT-driven Swahili chatbot that seeks to empower smallholder farmers by detecting crop diseases and providing culturally sensitive agricultural advice.

This groundbreaking project combines AI and IoT to aid small-scale farmers, especially those with limited resources.



Esther Kunda

Currently, Esther holds the position of Director General for Innovation and Emerging Technologies, Rwanda. Under her leadership, the National AI Policy was developed and implemented in the country in April 2023. The Policy's mission statement is "to leverage AI to power economic growth, improve quality of life and position Rwanda as a global innovator for responsible and inclusive AI".

Esther holds a Master's Degree in Information Technology from Carnegie Mellon University and a Bachelor of Science from the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology.



Huguette Diakabana

Huguette Diakabana is a dedicated global health practitioner, digital transformation advisor, and inspirational speaker with a mission to bridge the gap to quality healthcare and life-saving technologies worldwide. Currently, Huguette collaborates with organisations and governments, harnessing the power of data to elevate the standard of health services. Her focus has evolved from technology implementation to influencing the planning and design stages, policy development, regulatory frameworks, and ensuring the integration of user and patient needs.

Moreover, Huguette is passionate about the potential of AI, she firmly believes in its profound impact on women's lives. She actively advocates for the inclusion of women's voices, stories, and concerns in AI testing and piloting phases. Her advocacy extends to leveraging AI to detect biases and identify areas that may have been overlooked in the past, ensuring that no one is left behind in the technological advancement journey.



Therese Kirongozi

Therese Kirongozi is a trailblazing techie, designer, engineer, and inventor revolutionising road safety in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with her groundbreaking traffic robots. These solar-powered, 8-foot-tall robots made of aluminium weigh 250 kilograms. Adorning Congolese cities, including Kinshasa, they boast cameras, antennas, and humanoid faces, efficiently directing traffic.

By 2022, Therese had deployed 45 units nationwide, with plans for expansive coverage. Her vision extends beyond accident reduction to fostering a culture of road safety. Notably, Therese's innovation yielded a 60% drop in accidents in major cities of DRC. Beyond her groundbreaking invention, Therese also spearheads the Women in Technology Association. Therese champions female involvement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, seeing it as vital for humanity's future. She embodies not just an inventor but a compassionate leader, inspiring hope for a safer, tech and AI-driven world.



Winnie Nakiyingi

Winnie Nakiyingi is a statistician from Uganda, currently working as a Statistical Consultant at Axiom-Dkfor, a Denmark-based consultancy firm. Before this, she was a tutor for the inaugural Master's of Mathematical Sciences for Teachers (MMST) program at AIMS Ghana. Her passion for empowering African women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) led to the foundation of Words That Count, an initiative that documents stories of successful African women in STEM. The aim is to present the various career paths on the STEM spectrum to young girls mapping their careers in STEM.

Winnie's other passion is bridging the gap between the natural and social sciences through collaborations between policymakers, diplomats, and scientists/researchers. In spearheading such science diplomacy engagements, she was invited to participate in the inaugural Immersion Program of the Science Diplomacy Week organised by the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator (GESDA) and the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR). The event was hosted in the historic Palais des Nations – the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. Winnie was also invited to attend the second Science Diplomacy Summit that took place in October 2022 in Switzerland.



Dr. Joyce Nakatumba-Nabende

Dr. Joyce Nakatumba-Nabende is a lecturer in the Department of Computer Science at Makerere University, where she also heads the Makerere artificial intelligence Lab. She leads and has worked on several research projects at the lab that aim to develop and apply Artificial Intelligence and machine learning methods and tools to improve the quality of life, especially in the developing world.

Currently, Dr. Nakatumba-Nabende is carrying out research in several areas, including the application of computer vision, machine learning and natural language processing in the areas of health and agriculture. Through the Makerere Artificial Intelligence Lab, she has been able to provide an environment to nurture and build institutional data science research training capacity for the masters, PhD, postdoctorate and training faculty trainees. She has supervised over 20 graduate students (completed and ongoing), including postdoctorates, PhD, and Master's in Computer Science, Software Engineering and Information Systems.



Daisy Gladys Iteriteka

Daisy Gladys Iteriteka currently serves as a national United Nations Volunteer Digital Innovator with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Despite prevailing beliefs that information technology is a male-dominated field with limited access for women and girls, Daisy has defied this notion through her volunteering efforts. As the sole woman in her technology unit in Burundi, she has embraced the opportunity to challenge stereotypes and contribute to digital innovation.

Starting as an IT intern in 2019, Daisy has since transitioned into a UN volunteer role focusing on monitoring and evaluation, as well as the digital unit. Daisy has also been involved in organising initiatives such as the Burundi Innovation Week, aimed at promoting development in alignment with the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and the Burundi Youth Innovators program, encouraging young entrepreneurs and innovators to showcase impactful solutions.



Natacha Nduwimana

Co-founded and run by Natacha, BiHUB is the first techpreneur hub in Burundi, bringing together young talents in an environment conducive to innovation through capacity building, collaboration, networking, entrepreneurship culture and a sense of service to society.

Prior to BiHUB, Natacha spent over 14 years working with global organizations in South Africa, Canada and Burundi. Passionate about women and youth empowerment and a philanthropist at heart, she was nominated in the top 20 women entrepreneurs spearheading a new entrepreneurial spirit in Rwanda in 2016.

Natacha also founded a non-profit organisation, AJEJI, which supports vulnerable women and children in Burundi. Her mission in life is to be a ray of hope for her community, and according to many, she is already.



Women Leading

the AI revolution in Africa



sama