Meta PUBLIC FIRST

Kenya's Digital Economy

From Mobile Money Pioneer to Digital Innovation Hub

Infrastructure

$1.2B

Kenya's projected annual GDP increase by 2035

4.4M

Additional Kenyans online by 2035

86%

Kenyans who say it is much easier to access reliable internet compared to a decade ago

Platforms

$550M

In direct business activity (2025)

2.7M

Kenyan SMEs use Meta's apps as digital storefronts, reducing capital barriers and reaching customers across borders

$410M

Productivity gains for businesses

85%

Online businesses that strongly agree that Meta platforms expanded customer base

92%

Meta platform users in Kenya that feel more connected to a wider community through Meta platforms

Open-Source AI

$6.4B

GDP contribution from increasing AI adoption

LLaMA, NLLB, and PyTorch lower licensing and infrastructure costs, enabling Kenyan developers to build locally relevant AI.

89%

Adults who say AI developed in Sub-Saharan Africa will be important for economic growth

80%

Business leaders who would definitely use open-source AI tools if available and accessible

M-Pesa showed that Africa could leapfrog, not follow. Now Kenyan developers are asking: what's next? From AI-powered maternal health systems to WhatsApp-based tutoring, the answer is emerging in Nairobi's tech hubs and spreading across the region.

In the past ten years, Kenya's ICT sector has been among the region's fastest-growing. Meta's platforms are helping businesses harness this momentum. In 2025, Meta's platforms generated **$140 million in economic activity for businesses across Kenya**. With continued innovation and investment, we estimate Kenya's digital economy could grow from **$4.2 billion today to $13 billion by 2035**.

Reaching this potential will depend on expanding equitable connectivity across Nairobi, Mombasa and other counties, lowering customer acquisition costs within Kenya and for cross-border growth, and widening access to advanced technology. Meta's investments in infrastructure, digital platforms and open-source AI can support progress in these areas, building on Kenya's existing strengths and helping to broaden participation in the digital economy.

As East Africa's technology hub, Kenya's digital development has implications beyond its borders—serving as a gateway for regional connectivity and a testing ground for innovations that spread across the continent.

01 | Infrastructure Expanding Access and Capacity

Digital infrastructure determines both the scale and the inclusiveness of Kenya's digital growth. Despite progress in recent years, internet penetration in Kenya stood at just 35% in 2024[1]—meaning the opportunity for expansion remains substantial. Investments in international connectivity, terrestrial fibre, and edge infrastructure—such as the Government's Universal Service Fund—will close this gap, making internet access cheaper and more reliable.

The 2Africa submarine cable, backed by substantial Meta investment, has landed in Mombasa and will accelerate digital growth in Kenya. By 2035, it is projected to boost Kenya's GDP by **$1.2 billion a year** on average and **bring 4.4 million additional people online**—more than the combined population of Nakuru and Kisumu counties. By lowering costs and improving performance, infrastructure investment ensures that Kenya's digital economy can continue to scale beyond major urban centres like Nairobi and Mombasa, enabling opportunity in rural and underserved counties.

Given Kenya's position as an East African hub, improving connectivity here can also help boost digital access and growth in neighbouring countries.

02 | Platforms Turning Connectivity into Economic Participation

Platforms are the bridge between connectivity and economic opportunity. For Kenyan entrepreneurs, SMEs, and informal businesses, Meta's platforms provide affordable tools to market products, communicate with customers, and operate beyond local markets. In 2025, we estimate **2.7 million Kenyan SMEs** used Meta's platforms to start and grow their businesses, contributing **$550 million to GDP**.

For a farmer in Nakuru selling directly to Nairobi restaurants, or a Mombasa tour operator booking clients from Europe, platforms are not just convenient—they are essential. We estimate that businesses using Meta's platforms realise **$410 million** in efficiency gains, reflecting faster coordination and lower transaction costs.

Platforms Enabling Agricultural Markets

Across Kenya's agricultural heartland, smallholder farmers are using WhatsApp Business to connect directly with buyers in Nairobi and Mombasa—bypassing intermediaries who reduce their profitability. A vegetable cooperative in Nakuru now coordinates orders, shares harvest photos, and confirms deliveries through group chats, reducing post-harvest losses and increasing farmer incomes. This pattern is replicating across counties: platforms turning fragmented local markets into efficient supply chains.

Beyond commerce, Meta's platforms strengthen social connections. According to our survey, **92% of users of Meta platforms in Kenya feel more connected to a wider community or group thanks to Meta's platforms.**

Taken together, these effects illustrate how platforms translate infrastructure investment into tangible economic and social outcomes.

03 | Open-Source AI Enabling Local Innovation

As Kenya's digital economy matures, access to advanced technologies will shape the next phase of growth. Kenya's growing AI ambitions are underpinned by a strong and increasingly coherent policy framework for AI and innovation, including the work of the Kenya AI Taskforce, the development of a National AI Strategy, and the ambitions set out in the National Digital Masterplan. Together, these initiatives signal clear government intent to position Kenya as a regional leader in responsible and inclusive AI adoption.

While interest in AI is high, barriers such as cost, technical complexity, and language have limited adoption. Open-source AI offers a way to overcome these constraints by lowering entry barriers and enabling local experimentation.

Meta's open-source AI models and developer tools—including LLaMA, PyTorch, React Native, and No Language Left Behind—support Kenya's developer community by providing access to world-class technology without prohibitive costs. **80%** of online business leaders in Kenya say they would definitely use open-source AI tools if they were available and accessible.

Kenyan AI Innovation in Action

Jacaranda Health's PROMPTS system demonstrates how Kenyan innovators are combining AI capability with platform reach. This AI-powered SMS service gives pregnant women and new mothers timely care information, reads incoming texts, triages risk, and connects women to nurses or provides referrals when needed. Built on accessible AI tools and reaching users through familiar messaging channels, PROMPTS has supported millions of pregnancy journeys and is now county governments—evidence that AI-enabled solutions can achieve health outcomes at population scale.

Kenya's established position in mobile financial services creates natural opportunities for AI applications—from credit scoring to fraud detection to customer service automation. Open-source tools enable Kenyan fintechs to build these capabilities without the licensing costs that would otherwise advantage larger, better-capitalised competitors.

By 2035, we estimate increased AI adoption could add $6.4 billion to Kenya's GDP.

Open-source AI enables Kenyan developers to build solutions in local languages and for local needs, supporting innovation across sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, education, and financial services. For Kenya, this is more than economic opportunity—it is a chance to extend its reputation as Africa's innovation pioneer into the AI era.

04 | Conclusion **Kenya's Next Chapter**

The economic opportunity facing Kenya is vast, but it is not without risk. Realising the promise of a digital future will depend on how effectively Kenya can continue to invest in infrastructure, broaden participation through platforms, and support innovation through open-source AI, while navigating challenges around affordability, skills, data governance, and uneven regional access. Policymakers face the task of ensuring that regulation keeps pace with innovation, that new technologies are trusted and inclusive, and that the benefits of digital growth are widely shared. These challenges, however, also point to clear opportunities for sustained public-private collaboration, targeted investment in digital skills and connectivity, and partnerships that strengthen local innovation ecosystems.

Kenya's position as East Africa's technology hub, the birthplace of mobile money, and a proving ground for innovations that scale across the continent provides a strong foundation to meet these challenges head-on. Meta's investments are helping Kenya build a digital economy that reaches every county, translating connectivity into jobs, platforms into businesses, and open-source tools into homegrown innovation. Kenya leapfrogged once with mobile money. The open-source AI era offers another chance to lead, setting an example others can follow.

Meta SSA EIR 2025 - Full Methodology Note

1 World Bank, 2026