

AI for Good Lab

Concept Note



Disclaimer

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of ITU concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The mention of specific companies or certain manufacturer products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by ITU in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Errors and omissions excepted, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.

All reasonable precautions have been taken by ITU to verify the information contained in this publication. However, the published material is being distributed without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader.

The opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of ITU or its membership.

ISBN

978-92-61-43221-8 (PDF version)

978-92-61-43231-7 (electronic version)



Please consider the environment before printing this report.

© ITU 2026

Some rights reserved. This work is licensed to the public through a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 3.0 IGO license (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO).

Under the terms of this licence, you may copy, redistribute and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, provided the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that ITU endorse any specific organization, products or services. The unauthorized use of the ITU names or logos is not permitted. If you adapt the work, then you must license your work under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If you create a translation of this work, you should add the following disclaimer along with the suggested citation: "This translation was not created by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). ITU is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the binding and authentic edition". For more information, please visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/>

AI for Good Lab

Concept Note



Table of contents

- 1 AI For Good Lab..... 1
- 2 Objectives and outcomes..... 1
- 3 AI for Good Lab main pillars 2
- 4 Key beneficiaries..... 4
- 5 How can countries establish AI for Good Lab 4
- 6 Implementation..... 5

1 AI For Good Lab

Within the framework of AI Solutions, Standards, and Skills, and mainly under the Skills and Capacity pillar of AI for Good, the **AI for Good Lab** mission is to enable developing and middle and low income countries to develop the local AI ecosystems to be able to harness the potential of frontier technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) and address the challenges related to AI skills development for the workforce, professionals, government, startups and youth. It provides a collaborative ecosystem that brings together governments, academia, industry, civil society, and startups to develop, evaluate, and scale AI solutions for social, economic, and environmental impact. The Lab contributes to strengthening ITU capacity to respond to the increasing demand for AI solutions based on international standards. More information about the AI for Good lab is available on the website: <https://aiforgood.itu.int/ai-for-good-lab>.

AI transformation at the national level is underpinned by three mutually reinforcing pillars:

1. AI Readiness Assessment and policy – Provides a systematic methodology for the assessment of national capabilities, AI ecosystem and stakeholder readiness, and structural gaps across policy, infrastructure, data, AI skills and innovation ecosystems.
2. AI Skills Development – Builds a comprehensive and inclusive AI talent base, equipping citizens, the workforce, policymakers, private and public sectors with the competencies required to develop, deploy, and work with AI systems.
3. Public AI Infrastructure (through AI Sandbox) establishes a foundational technical environment (including compute, datasets, open-source, necessary toolsets, and training resources) to support experimentation and validation in AI solutions, strategies, AI development, deployment, and scaling, while ensuring equitable access and interoperability by aligning with international standards.

2 Objectives and outcomes

The main objectives of the Lab are to enable emerging economies to:

- a) Assess their AI readiness and gaps in terms of policies and strategies that need to be implemented to harness AI's potential for economic development,
- b) Leverage AI for development challenges for different sectors for example health, agriculture and education amongst others,
- c) Build comprehensive local AI ecosystems, encourage experimentation and innovation and
- d) Address the AI skills divide.

For emerging economies, such labs can act as a bridge between innovation and development impact, ensuring AI becomes a tool for inclusive growth rather than a source of risk or inequality.

The main outcomes are to

1. Establish a process for implementing the methodology for conducting national AI readiness assessment and AI policy development which will then be operationalized through skills development and public AI infrastructure components of the AI for Good Lab.
2. Facilitate knowledge sharing and exchange of best practices to make AI integration seamless in various sectors, using techniques such as crowd sourced challenges and information exchange platforms.

3. Facilitate the setup of a Public AI infrastructure –such as shared compute resources, public datasets for training AI models, open-source AI models and tools in the AI sandbox environments for experimentation, validation in AI solutions and strategies, and real-world sector specific AI applications based on standards.
4. Create an ecosystem for collaboration around AI technologies, integrating the reusable techniques in various use cases in different domains, using a set of open resources (open data, open models and open source), aligned with ITU standards.
5. Scale AI skills development through capacity building programmes for youth, workforce, startups and AI professionals.

The project scope includes engaging with ITU Member States and Regional Offices to promote and set up AI for Good Labs and disseminating knowledge and best practices via events to showcase the impact of the AI solutions, enable pre-standards and standards contribution, up-skilling and hands-on trainings for the local ecosystem on AI technologies to experiment, study and solve regionally relevant problems.

3 AI for Good Lab main pillars

The AI for Good Lab brings together the ITU AI related projects targeting different groups (i.e. youth, government, regulators, policymakers, workforce, AI start-ups and professionals) under three main pillars for national AI development (See Figure 1):

1. Pillar 1 – AI readiness and policy
2. Pillar 2 – AI skills development
3. Pillar 3 – Public AI infrastructure

The concept of the AI for Good Lab and the services provided to emerging economies to help them harness the potential of AI is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

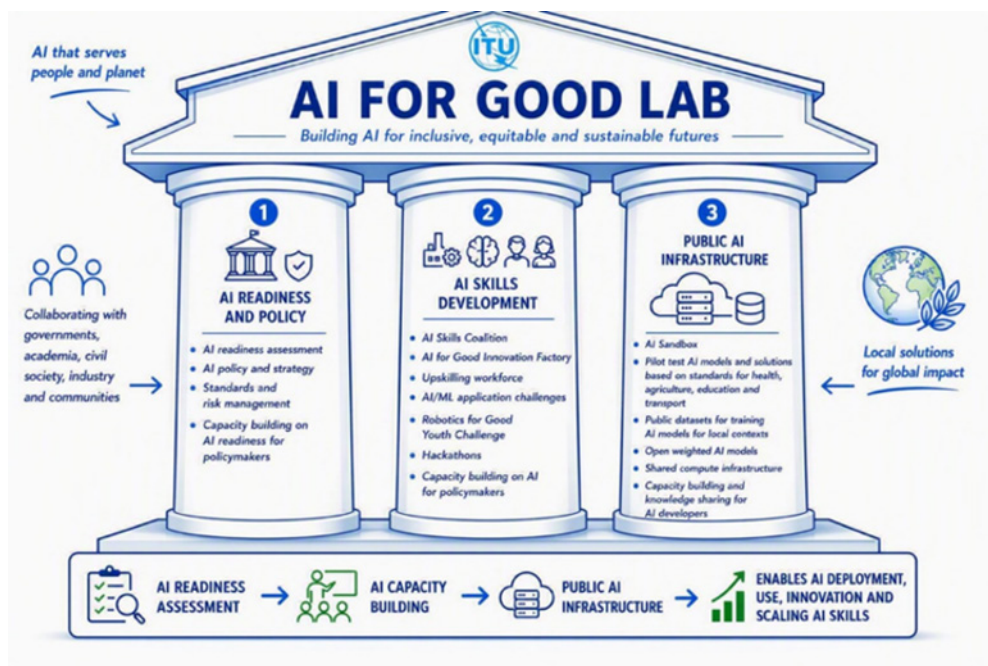


Figure 1: ITU AI for Good Lab: Main pillars

More information about the AI for Good lab is available on the website: <https://aiforgood.itu.int/ai-for-good-lab>.

The AI for Good Lab is designed to help countries assess their AI readiness, strengthen national innovation ecosystems, address AI skills gaps, and accelerate the development of locally relevant AI solutions based on international standards.

By combining AI readiness and policy support, adoption of international AI standards, workforce development, and access to infrastructure, the initiative seeks to ensure that AI becomes a driver of inclusive growth and sustainable development rather than a source of inequality.

The Lab will support countries to implement AI solutions based on ITU standards and provide an environment for experimenting and testing AI solutions under real local conditions before deployment. This will provide an institutional pathway for developing countries to establish a *Public AI Infrastructure* – with public datasets based on local contexts for training AI models for priority sectors such as health, agriculture, education and mobility, compute infrastructure, shared open-weight AI models adapted to local contexts that governments, startups, private sector and academia can reuse at lower cost.

The table below shows the ITU AI projects which will be implemented for each pillar.

Pillar	Objectives	ITU AI Projects
Pillar 1: AI readiness and policy	Provides a systematic methodology for the assessment of national capabilities, AI ecosystem and stakeholder readiness, and structural gaps across policy, infrastructure, data, AI skills and innovation ecosystems The Lab will provide diagnostic, advisory, and capabilities to assess and strengthen AI readiness.	AI readiness assessment, AI policy, capacity building activities on AI readiness
Pillar 2: AI skills development	Scale AI skills development through capacity building programmes for youth, workforce, start-ups and AI professionals The Lab acts as a capacity-building hub targeting multiple stakeholder groups.	AI Skills Coalition Capacity building catalogue, AI for Good Innovation Factory and Chapter set up, AI and robotics youth chapter set up, AI and robotics youth challenge (training for teachers and secondary school students), Hackathons, Capacity building on AI for policy makers and AI/ML Challenge
Pillar 3: Public AI infrastructure	Setup of the Public AI infrastructure – compute resources, data ecosystems, opensource, training resources and toolsets in the AI sandbox environments –necessary for experimentation and validation of AI solutions and strategies for real-world AI applications for different sectors (health, agriculture, education, etc.)	AI for Good Sandbox, Sectoral AI applications and public datasets and AI models (Health, agriculture, etc.)

The Lab will enable emerging economies to scale impact by:

- a) Catalysing AI skills development for different user groups (ie youth, start-ups, government, regulators, workforce and professionals).
- b) Providing a shared standards-based experimentation and validation environment through the ITU AI for Good Sandbox to pilot test AI solutions before deployment.
- c) Moving beyond isolated pilots by bringing together innovation ecosystems, technical training resources into a tangible infrastructure. The AI for Good sandbox will enable countries move beyond one-off pilots by testing and making use of reusable building blocks – datasets, tools, documentation, and sector-specific AI models – that can later be reused by different user groups, i.e. start-ups, academia and public sector.

4 Key beneficiaries

The key beneficiaries of the AI for Good Lab in the country will include the following:

- a) Academia and researchers: enabling collaboration and creation of pre-standard research solutions and local innovations with the latest AI techniques and models.
- b) Students and researchers: through the ITU AI/ML Challenges, AI and robotics for good youth competition, hackathons, and other opportunities to develop, experiment, and validate AI solutions to address real world problems.
- c) Startups and innovators: through the ITU AI Innovation Factory programme, AI startup accelerator programme and ITU AI/ML Challenges and hackathons to adopt international AI standards, curate datasets relevant to local contexts and develop relevant AI pilot projects for different sectors (e.g. Health, education, agriculture, natural disaster management, transport).
- d) Ministries, regulators and policymakers: leverage the AI readiness and policy toolkits to answer "what if" questions on AI strategy and understand the impact of the policy. Join the AI Skills Coalition as partner to provide online access to the AI courses offered for different user categories – i.e. beginners, intermediate and advanced level.
- e) Government officials, AI startups, academia and public agencies: use the AI for Good sandbox to take impactful and locally relevant decisions on AI use cases and choose the best solutions, strategies and deployment options.

5 How can countries establish AI for Good Lab

Countries who would like to establish the AI for Good Lab, would need to send a formal letter of request via their country's ITU focal point to Director of TSB by email (tsbdir@itu.int) and copy to aiforgoodlab@itu.int) indicating their interest to set up the AI for Good Lab and nominating a focal point to coordinate with ITU for the project.

When responding to requests received, ITU will indicate the activities to be implemented for each phase (see next section) and the pre-requisites that the country focal point (nominated for the project) will need to provide such as human resources to work with ITU on the project, establishment of project steering committee, events to be organized by the country with ITU support and an estimate for the voluntary contribution from the country for the implementation of the project.

Countries would be expected to cover the costs related to organization of events such as workshops and hackathons (ie logistics for the event such as rental of meeting room, remote participation, interpretation if required, and coffee and lunch breaks for workshops), travel of ITU staff for events held for the AI for Good lab, ITU staff time on the project and any equipment required for the Lab. ITU will help to provide the compute credits for the AI infrastructure for the AI for Good Lab.

6 Implementation

This section provides an overview of the AI for Good Lab implementation phases and activities.

A four-phase approach is proposed for the AI for Good Lab implementation:

- a) Phase 1 - Information gathering and exchange;
- b) Phase 2 - AI for Good Lab components set up
- c) Phase 3- Operations and implementation
- d) Phase 4 - Project showcase

The table below shows the timeline and activities and milestones for each phase.

SI No	Phase	Activity	Timeline	Responsible	Actions and Milestone
1	Phase 1	Explain concept of AI for Good Lab and its components (i.e. Innovation Factory, AI Skills Coalition, AI Sandbox, AI readiness, AI and robotics for youth)	M1	ITU	Concept note identifying the components of AI for Good Lab which the country is interested to implement, technical partners, budget required by country for project, project specific milestones
2		Formal letter of interest including confirmation of budget and voluntary contribution to ITU for the activities to be implemented and nomination of country focal point for the project	M2	Country	Formal letter exchange between country and TSB Director with the focal point from the country nominated and confirmation of budget available and voluntary contribution to ITU for implementation of AI for Good Lab
3		Announcement of collaboration between ITU and country for AI for Good Lab	M2	ITU	Announcement made by ITU upon confirmation of voluntary contribution received from country for AI for Good Lab
4		Online workshop for launch of AI for Good Lab	M2-M3	Country	Online kick-off workshop with local focal point and technical partners; Initiate project discussion with focal point Milestone: launch webinars with country focal point, technical partners and innovators

SI No	Phase	Activity	Timeline	Responsible	Actions and Milestone
5		Engage with local stakeholders, including regulators, innovators, research, and academia	M2	ITU	Workshops to be held with local stakeholders to discuss local AI projects of interest
6		Identify scope and requirements for country AI projects to be implemented in AI Sandbox	M2-M3	Country with ITU support	Country focal point and ITU prepare project proposals for AI projects identified with clear target and timeline, which are in line with country priorities and ITU AI for Good goals
7		Resource allocation	M3	ITU	Allocate compute, datasets, toolsets for identified projects
8	Phase 2	Train the trainers program and AI readiness capacity building	M3-M4	ITU in joint collaboration with the country	Different levels of trainings (for generalists, specialists, and AI professionals) will be provided for project owners and stakeholders, based on the development stage and priorities. 12 hrs of hybrid training based on the ITU AI readiness report will be provided. Milestone: 1. Training will be provided to stakeholders identified by the country Focal Point

SI No	Phase	Activity	Timeline	Responsible	Actions and Milestone
9		AI Sandbox training	M3-M4	ITU in joint collaboration with the country	Hands-on training based on ITU-T Y.3172 machine learning pipeline: 1. Domain specific Datasets and trainings (regional) 2. AI Models (open, sovereign) 3. Domain-specific use cases 4. Policies derived from use cases 5. Toolsets for Experimentation 6. Validation mechanisms 7. How to use the sandbox
10		Organization of AI/ML Challenges for different sectors identified	M4-M5	Country with ITU support	
11		Innovation Factory Chapter Set up	M4-M6	Country with ITU support	
12		AI and Robotics for youth chapter set up	M4-M6	Country with ITU support	
13		AI for Good Lab project deliverables implementation and monitoring	M5-M7	ITU	Organise fortnightly project management meetings with country focal point to monitor progress on the plan for deliverables of the AI for Good Lab
14	Phase 3	Projects execution	M5-M9	ITU jointly with country	Workshops, hackathons, trainings, AI Innovation Factory accelerator programme and AI and Robotics for youth competitions – to be planned with country focal point for the project

SI No	Phase	Activity	Timeline	Responsible	Actions and Milestone
15	Phase 4	Project showcase	M9	Country	Showcase the impact of the deliverables which may include the release of new datasets and open-source AI solutions, presentation of winning solution in hackathons, standards adoption analysis, AI startups, AI startup accelerator programmes and AI skills capacity building for youth, workforce and policy-makers
16		Discussion on project extension and future directions	M10	ITU	Discuss with focal point on the project plan for the next year and identify activities for joint collaboration on AI for Good Lab components

International Telecommunication Union
Place des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland

ISBN 978-92-61-43221-8



9 789261 432218

Published in Switzerland
Geneva, 2026

Photo credits: Adobe Stock