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# Feminist Futures of Digital Labor and Democracy in Africa

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## Abstract

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Across Africa, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital platforms are reshaping both the future of work and the practice of governance. While these shifts offer opportunities for economic participation and civic engagement, they also risk reproducing entrenched gender inequalities. This paper examines how AI-mediated systems influence women's roles in digital labor and governance, and how feminist approaches can advance inclusive democratic futures in Africa.

The study asks: How can AI-driven labor and governance ecosystems be reconfigured to promote gender inclusion and democratic participation rather than reinforce precarity? Using a feminist political economy lens, the analysis integrates three strands: (1) trends in AI adoption in labor markets and governance across Africa; (2) case studies of women's experiences in digital labor sectors, including outsourcing, data annotation, and digital entrepreneurship; and (3) civic tech and feminist organizing that mobilize digital tools for democratic accountability.

Findings: Automation disproportionately threatens women's employment in Africa's outsourcing sector, where women are 10% more vulnerable than men to job displacement, with nearly 40% of tasks at risk by 2030 (AP News, 2025); While women comprise over 60% of Africa's digital workforce, they are concentrated in repetitive and highly automatable tasks, reinforcing precarity in digital labor markets (Jobtech Alliance, 2025); Algorithmic governance systems, such as digital ID projects, risk excluding marginalized groups; in Kenya, biometric registration has been shown to entrench gendered exclusion, limiting women's access to services and rights (Wired, 2020).

However, digital mobilization offers pathways of resistance. Women-led initiatives including digital rights campaigns, feminist digital literacy programs, and youth advocacy platforms demonstrate how AI and digital tools can be reclaimed to enhance democratic participation and accountability. These initiatives reveal that feminist-informed approaches to AI governance can help mitigate exclusion, ensure fairness, and create new spaces for democratic engagement.

This paper argues that realizing feminist futures of democracy and digital labor in Africa requires deliberate strategies: embedding gender-responsive AI governance frameworks, strengthening protections for women in digital labor markets, and fostering collective organizing and

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advocacy across digital platforms. By centering gender equity within AI design and policy, African states and civil society can transform digital labor from a site of vulnerability into a lever for democratic renewal.

This aligns with Theme 3: Women, Gender, and Digitally-Mediated Occupations, it highlights the potential of AI to be both a threat and an opportunity, depending on whether governance is framed through a feminist and democratic lens.

**Keywords:** AI Governance, Digital Labor, Gender Inclusion, Algorithmic Bias, Feminist Political Economy