Google takes on 'Africa's challenges' with first AI centre in Ghana

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Moustapha Cisse, head of Google Artificial Intelligence (AI) centre in Ghana, wants to collaborate with local universities and start-ups

An artificial intelligence research laboratory opened by Google in Ghana, the first of its kind in Africa, will take on challenges across the

continent, researchers say.

The US technology giant said the lab in the capital Accra would address economic, political and [environmental issues](#).

"Africa has many challenges where the use of AI could be beneficial, sometimes even more than in other places," Google's head of AI Accra, Moustapha Cisse, told AFP at the centre's official opening this week.

Similar research centres have already opened in cities around the world including Tokyo, Zurich, New York and Paris.

The new lab, Cisse said, would use AI to develop solutions in healthcare, education and agriculture—such as helping to diagnose certain types of crop disease.

Cisse, an expert from Senegal, said he hoped specialist engineers and AI researchers would collaborate with local organisations and policymakers.

Google is working with universities and [start-ups](#) in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa to enhance AI development regionally, he said.

"We just need to ensure that the right education and opportunities are in place," he said.

"That is why Google is sponsoring a lot of these young people for their degrees... to help develop a new generation of AI developers."

'Clear opportunity'

Other tech companies, including Facebook, have launched initiatives in Africa and demographics are a key factor behind the drive.

Africa's population is estimated to be 1.2 billion, 60 percent of them under the age of 24.

By 2050, the UN estimates the population will double to 2.4 billion.

As online social networks expand, that presents a huge market for US tech giants to tap into.

"There's a clear opportunity for companies like Facebook and Google to really go in and put a pole in the sand," said Daniel Ives, a technology researcher at GBH Insights in New York.

"If you look at Netflix, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, where is a lot of that growth coming from? It's international," he told AFP in a recent interview.

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