# Nigerian economist Tope Fasua urges proactive, inclusive approach to AI for Africa’s development



In an insightful reflection on the growing influence of artificial intelligence (AI), Nigerian economist and author Tope Fasua explores the implications of AI adoption for Nigeria and the broader Global South. Writing for Premium Times Nigeria, Fasua emphasises the importance of proactive engagement with AI, advocating for robust, inclusive, and sustainable development rather than the commodity-like, superficial use of AI technologies.

Fasua begins by acknowledging the unprecedented arrival of AI, highlighting that it is no longer a distant concept but an ever-present force embedded in everyday technology. However, he expresses concern over Africa’s historical pattern of hesitancy toward technological revolutions, noting previous missed opportunities during the First through Fourth Industrial Revolutions. This pattern, he warns, could result in the continent repeatedly playing a subordinate role on the global stage if it fails to actively participate in the AI revolution.

Addressing common misconceptions, Fasua stresses that despite AI's rapid advancement, human intelligence retains distinct advantages. AI, he argues, lacks the capacity for epiphanies, serendipitous discoveries, and physical task execution without human involvement. For instance, while AI can rapidly generate detailed company profiles, it cannot autonomously undertake complex physical constructions such as building houses or aeroplanes. Thus, human cognition and physical effort remain indispensable.

Fasua also raises concerns about ethical challenges AI introduces, particularly in education. The rise of AI-powered cheating has placed academic institutions in difficult positions as existing anti-plagiarism measures show limitations. Moreover, he warns that AI’s continued sophistication may exacerbate fraudulent activities, citing examples such as voice cloning used for financial fraud.

On a broader level, Fasua questions how AI can be harnessed to address the pressing socioeconomic issues Nigeria and the Global South face—issues like poverty, food security, education deficits, literacy, and inadequate infrastructure. He notes that much of the current AI marketing focuses on personal enrichment and commercial gain, often ignoring these critical developmental challenges. “AI can make your work faster, neater, more professional. It can enable your company to churn out paperwork, emails, proposals, write-ups etc that look like the work of genius,” Fasua observes. “But will it intrinsically make you better? Build your brain for more capabilities?”

He calls on early AI adopters and tech-savvy individuals to ensure that AI technologies are directed toward advancing societal development rather than merely individual or corporate profit. This, Fasua suggests, requires collective effort and engagement from diverse stakeholders, including sociologists, psychologists, engineers, philosophers, and medical professionals, not just governments or tech experts. “Multi-stakeholder approaches are what will work. We need everyone chipping in as every opinion counts,” he states.

Reflecting on Africa’s past economic challenges, Fasua draws parallels between the continent’s historical loss of food sovereignty following decolonisation and the risk of missing out on AI sovereignty. He highlights “borrow pose,” a colloquial term referring to adopting superficial gestures without genuine ownership or understanding, as a hazard to the continent’s AI ambitions.

In addition, Fasua touches on emerging concerns about data privacy and copyright in AI’s development. AI’s reliance on vast datasets—often generated by the public—raises questions about fair compensation for data creators and the need for consent regarding data use. He mentions user frustrations with predictive AI features that read documents in real time, sparking global debates on privacy and user autonomy.

Fasua also considers the potential impact of AI on employment, particularly in contexts like Nigeria where unemployment is already a serious issue. He is cautious about optimistic assertions that AI will create new jobs, arguing that such benefits may accrue primarily to those with advanced skills and knowledge.

Concluding his commentary, Fasua reinforces the importance of engagement with AI, urging Nigerians and countries in the Global South to embrace the technology thoughtfully and strategically to avoid being sidelined once again. He encourages society to advance beyond mere acquisition and usage of AI towards genuine innovation and sovereignty in the field.

Through his comprehensive analysis, Tope Fasua contributes to the ongoing discourse on AI’s role in shaping Nigeria’s future, underscoring the necessity of a balanced approach that realises the technology’s benefits while managing its risks and challenges. His reflections invite policymakers, academics, and citizens alike to consider how AI can be leveraged to meet the continent’s unique developmental needs.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://muckrack.com/tope-fasua/articles> - This resource provides a collection of articles by Tope Fasua, covering his views on AI and its implications for Nigeria. It showcases his extensive writing on socioeconomic development and technology.
3. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/763348-ten-facts-nigerian-must-know-about-socioeconomic-development-by-tope-fasua.html> - This article lists socioeconomic facts relevant to Nigeria and touches on development issues that AI could address. It aligns with Fasua's emphasis on using AI for broader societal development.
4. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/tag/tope-fasua> - This archive of Tope Fasua's writings at Premium Times Nigeria highlights his contributions to discussions on AI, economic development, and societal issues in Nigeria.
5. <https://www.noahwire.com/> - This link is associated with Noah Wire Services, which is mentioned in the context of providing insights into AI and its impact, although specific content may not be directly available.
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7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiwAFBVV95cUxPUGFMdHJfbkdxdlh2RmUxQ09LaHJxc2J5ZDNnT0VTeWVpREFzY2dZYmVlTHlhU2NLY3V5NUE2QzhZaFA0dWEtcTJvbnAwQ2JqTER5YmJNeHFORnZ1aVp5NTA1MVVvWnZpV3JCWU1Sb0ZlbkEwY1lTa0NlU3lKWW1aZS11R0lXTHFvVlhPVk5aaXBpWWlDeTZDSC1aOWhfUEMzRFJqTHVQZ2JvbXhQVDQzeU5Id3RuOENWbGpqR1NJTWo?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data