



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



## Concept Note

### National Workshop

#### **Enhancing Resilience of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises for Accelerating SDGs in Ethiopia, with the support of generative Artificial Intelligence Tools**

United Nations Conference Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

*17-19 December 2025 (Addis Ababa International Convention Centre)*

## 1. Background

Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are cornerstones of Ethiopia's socio-economic development. They contribute significantly to job creation, income generation, and inclusive and sustainable growth, particularly for youth and women. MSMEs in Ethiopia account for the most business entities in the country. They create the majority of new jobs and form a key part of Ethiopia's industrialization and poverty reduction endeavors. They are essential for realizing [Ethiopia's Ten-Year Development Plan](#)<sup>1</sup> and for accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in reducing poverty (SDG1), promoting inclusive growth (SDG 8), fostering innovation (SDG 9), and reducing inequality (SDG 10).

Despite their significant contributions to sustainable development, Ethiopian MSMEs face a number of persistent challenges. Many operate with limited access to finance, weak integration into formal value chains, low levels of productivity, and inadequate digital and managerial capacities. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed these vulnerabilities, demonstrating the need for greater resilience of MSMEs in the face of global economic shocks and technological disruptions. Moreover, as global markets and supply systems become increasingly digital, MSMEs risk being left behind unless they possess strengthened capacities to harness new technologies and develop the skills necessary to compete and thrive in the rapid expansion of the global digital economy, including B2B e-commerce.

In this context, generative Artificial Intelligence (gen AI) represents an unprecedented opportunity for MSMEs to transform their operations, expand market reach, increase revenue, enhance competitiveness, and drive innovations, and in the process, contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Generative AI refers to technologies capable of creating new content, insights, and solutions, from marketing materials and product designs to data analysis and customer service automation. When applied effectively and responsively, generative AI can reduce operational costs, improve decision-making processes, expand market access, and support evidence-based planning for micro-, small and medium-sized businesses. It can also play a crucial role in improving productivity in economic sectors vital to Ethiopia's economy such as agriculture, manufacturing and services.

However, realizing these opportunities requires targeted capacity building to MSME entrepreneurs and an enabling policy environment. At the moment, policymakers and MSME entrepreneurs lack awareness of AI's potential. Moreover, they face technological barriers that include high initial setup costs, unreliable digital infrastructure, ongoing maintenance and a general lack of technological expertise, in particular, how to utilize and co-create gen AI tools. Addressing these constraints

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dpgethiopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/10-Year-Development-Plan-Ethiopia.pdf>



contributes to MSME growth and resilience. Furthermore, ethical, regulatory, and financing challenges surrounding AI adoption need to be addressed to ensure responsible and inclusive deployment of gen AI, in alignment with national AI strategies and sustainable development priorities.

The Government of Ethiopia has identified digital transformation as a key national priority, as reflected in the [Digital Ethiopia 2025](#)<sup>2</sup> strategy, which envisions leveraging digital technology to drive productivity, inclusion, and service delivery. Supporting MSMEs to adopt gen AI applications aligns directly with this agenda and with the broader ambition to build a knowledge-based economy. By empowering MSMEs to use generative AI, Ethiopia would unlock new pathways for innovation, economic resilience, and sustainable development, while accelerating progress on the SDGs and its 10-Year Development Plan (2021-2030).

In that regard, this workshop aims to strengthen the capacity of MSMEs, policymakers, and other stakeholders to understand and apply gen AI solutions for inclusive and sustainable economic transformation. Through a combination of hands-on training, knowledge exchange, and dialogue between policymakers and MSME entrepreneurs, the workshop aims to explore and identify practical actions and policy recommendations that facilitate the adoption of gen AI among MSMEs in the country.

## 2. Overall objectives

The national workshop aims to address the following overall objectives:

- a. Build technical capacities of Federal and state level policy makers and implementers to design and deliver coherent policy mechanisms conducive for harnessing gen AI among MSMEs
- b. Build and strengthen entrepreneurship capacities to integrate gen AI based tools into financial planning, management and marketing operations among MSMEs
- c. Facilitate dialogue between policymakers and entrepreneurs on demands, gaps and opportunities to apply gen AI tools in Ethiopia for accelerating progress towards SDGs in Ethiopia

## 3. Expected Outcomes

Participants will include both policymakers and MSME entrepreneurs. Priority will be given to women, youth and persons with disabilities. By engaging both policymakers and MSME entrepreneurs, the workshop will strengthen capacities of policymakers to facilitate evidence-based policymaking process conducive for facilitating the application of gen AI tools among MSMEs in Ethiopia. Additionally, participating policymakers are expected to improve their awareness and skills of utilizing gen AI tools and deliver coherent policy support to facilitate gen AI adoption among MSMEs. For participating MSME entrepreneurs, the workshop will offer opportunities to dialogue with policymakers and reflect entrepreneurs' perspectives in the policymaking process that has a bearing on the required enabling policy environment for MSMEs, including access to digital tools and infrastructure. Through this workshop, MSME entrepreneurs will also be equipped with hands-on skills to identify and utilize gen

---

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.lawethiopia.com/images/Policy\\_documents/Digital-Ethiopia-2025-Strategy-english.pdf](https://www.lawethiopia.com/images/Policy_documents/Digital-Ethiopia-2025-Strategy-english.pdf)



AI solutions that will elevate MSME growth and resilience. After the workshop, participants are expected to continue sharing the knowledge learnt with other MSME entrepreneurs in their respective communities.

#### 4. Specific Outputs

At the conclusion of the capacity building workshop, it is expected that the participants will:

- a. Be equipped with the latest know-how and skills to elevate MSME growth and resilience with gen AI tools
- b. Have strengthened entrepreneurship capacities necessary to understand and apply gen AI tools to tackle economic shocks and uncertainties
- c. Impart know-how on leveraging gen AI tools that will expand MSME access to affordable financial resources and marketing opportunities
- d. At least 70 per cent of participants indicate that they will apply and share knowledge learnt in their communities to further promote the adoption of gen AI among MSMEs in Ethiopia

#### 5. (Initial) Programme<sup>3</sup>

##### DAY 1 — Understanding Gen AI and Its Relevance for MSMEs

Time	Session
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:30	Opening Ceremony and Group Photo
09:30 – 10:30	Session 1: Overview of MSMEs and SDGs in Ethiopia
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 – 12:00	Session 2: Introduction to Generative AI
12:00 – 13:00	Session 3: The Potential of Gen AI for MSMEs
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 – 15:30	Session 4: Ethical, Data and Regulatory Considerations in AI Adoption
15:30 – 16:45	Session 5: Hands-on Demonstration: Exploring Gen AI Tools
16:45 – 17:00	Wrap-up and Reflections

<sup>3</sup> Please note the programme is draft and indicative. It will be updated/confirmed with the competitively selected training provider and the government counterpart



**DAY 2 — Practical Application of Gen AI for MSME Operations**

Time	Session
09:00 – 09:15	Recap of Day 1
09:15 – 10:45	Session 6: Gen AI for Business Development and Marketing
10:45 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7: Gen AI for Financial Planning and Operations
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break
13:30 – 15:00	Session 8: Gen AI in Product and Service Innovation
15:00 – 15:15	Coffee Break
15:15 – 16:45	Session 9: Group Exercise – Developing an AI-Enabled MSME Solution
16:45 – 17:00	Wrap-up

**DAY 3 — Integrating Gen AI into MSME business strategies for Sustainable Development**

Time	Session
09:00 – 09:15	Recap of Day 2
09:15 – 10:45	Session 10: Building AI-Ready MSMEs: Skills, Infrastructure, and Partnerships
10:45 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Session 11: Case Studies – Successful Use of Gen AI among African MSMEs
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break
13:30 – 15:00	Session 12: Measuring Impact: How Gen AI Contributes to SDGs
15:00 – 15:15	Coffee Break
15:15 – 16:30	Session 13: Planning for actions forward
16:30 – 17:00	Certificate awarding

**Annex**

Request from Ministry of Industry, Ethiopia



Request from Ministry of Industry