

Google to establish its first African cloud region in South Africa

At the second Google for Africa event that took place on 5 October, Google announced its intent to establish a new Google Cloud region in South Africa. According to research by AlphaBeta Economics, the cloud region will contribute more than a cumulative \$2.1bn to the country's GDP and will support the creation of more than 40,000 jobs by 2030.



Niral Patel, director of Google Cloud Africa | image supplied

Niral Patel, director of Google Cloud Africa, said: “Along with the cloud region, we are expanding our network through the Equiano subsea cable and building dedicated cloud interconnect sites in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Lagos and Nairobi.”

South African deputy minister of communications and digital technologies Philly Mapulane, said: “Our National Development Plan 2030 calls for stimulating growth in the information, communication and technology (ICT) sector and innovation by driving public and private ICT investment, especially in network upgrades and expansion. Google's recent efforts in this regard have been particularly encouraging. The Equiano cable landed in Cape Town recently, and the improved speed and reduced internet costs that this can deliver has the potential to drive much fuller internet participation for many more South Africans.”

More support for African languages in Gboard and a refreshed Street View

Earlier this year, Google announced plans to open its first African product development centre in Nairobi. At the event, Google announced the launch of voice typing support for nine more African languages in Gboard, the Google keyboard (isiNdebele, isiXhosa, Kinyarwanda, Northern Sotho, Swati, Sesotho, Tswana, Tshivenda and Xitsonga) – while 24 new languages are now supported on Google Translate, including Lingala, which is used by more than 45 million people across Central Africa.

To make Maps more useful, Google also refreshed Street View in Kenya, South Africa, Senegal and Nigeria with nearly

300,000km of imagery. This helps people virtually explore and navigate neighbourhoods on Google Maps. They are also extending the service to Rwanda, meaning that Street View is now available in 11 African countries.

Hustle Academy and Africa Investment Fund

Africa's internet economy has the potential to grow to \$180bn by 2025 – 5.2% of the continent's GDP. To support African entrepreneurs in growing and developing their talent, Google continues to support African small businesses through the Hustle Academy and Google Business Profiles and to help job seekers learn the skills they need through Developer Scholarships and Career Certifications.

Google, through its \$50m Africa Investment Fund that targets equity investments in tech startups, has since invested in three businesses over the past nine months - SafeBoda, a transportation app in Uganda and Nigeria, Carry1st, a South African mobile gaming startup and Lori Systems, an e-logistics company based in Kenya.

Nitin Gajria, managing director of Google Africa, added: "We are collaborating with governments, policymakers, NGOs, telcos, business leaders, creators and media so that we can help accelerate Africa's digital transformation. And it's the talent and drive of the individuals in the countries and communities of Africa that will power Africa's economic growth."

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