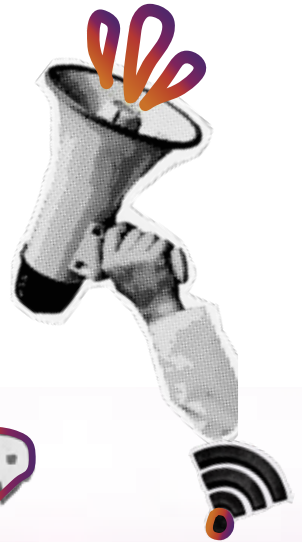


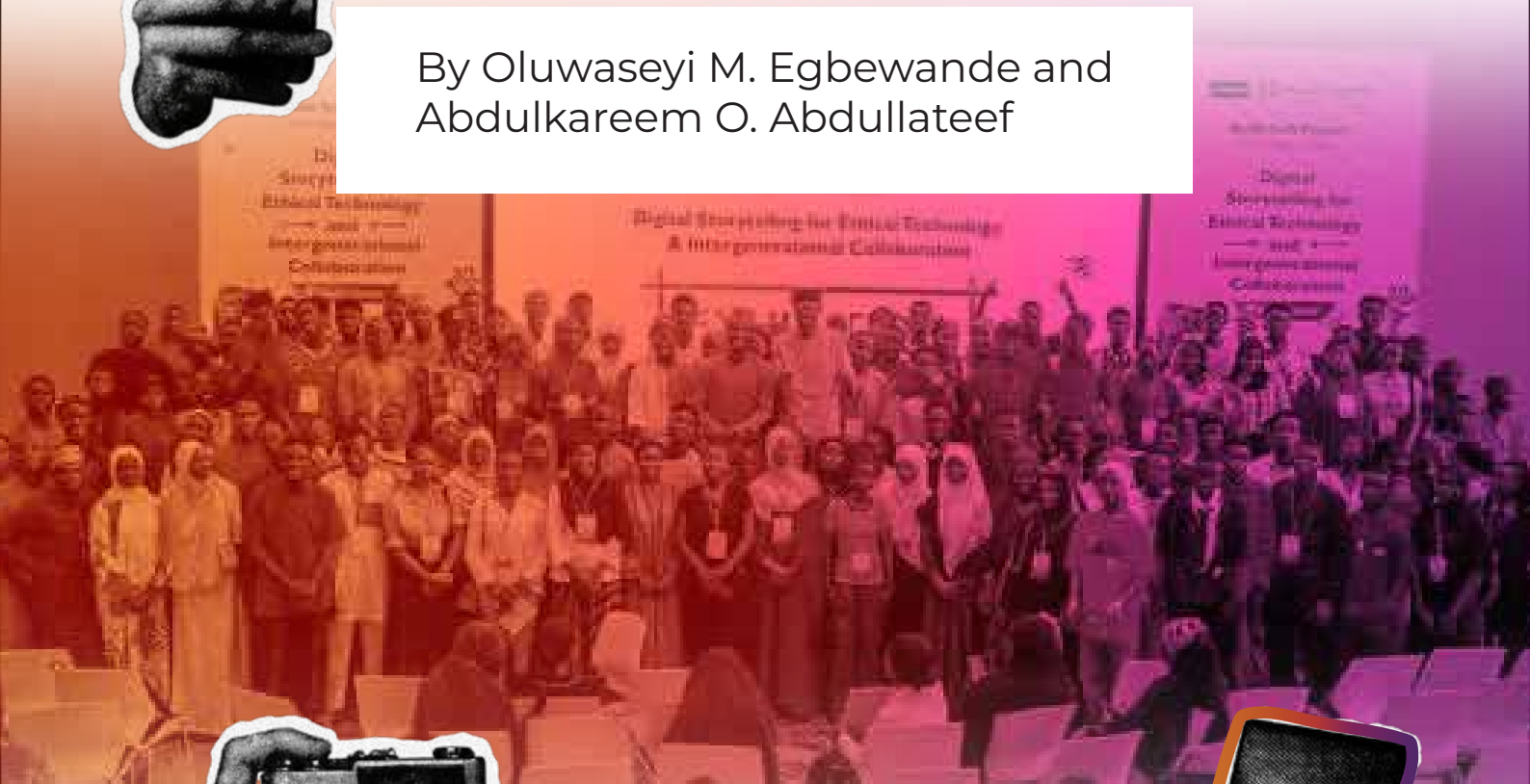
Building Ethical and Intergenerational Digital Citizenship in Nigeria



*Lessons from a Digital Storytelling and
Intergenerational Collaboration
Project in Kwara State*



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Motivation and Policy Context



Nigeria's digital transformation is increasingly shaping communication, education, employment, entrepreneurship and civic participation, while also creating new challenges related to misinformation, privacy, online harms and responsible technology use (FMCIDE, 2026; UNESCO, 2024). These challenges make digital literacy increasingly important as both a technical capability and a foundation for informed, responsible participation in society.

Nigeria has already established an important policy foundation for digital literacy. The National Digital Literacy Framework (NDLF), developed by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), defines digital literacy across six competence areas, namely, devices and software operation, information and data literacy, digital content creation, communication and collaboration, safety, and problem-solving (NITDA, 2023). The framework forms part of Nigeria's broader ambition to achieve 95% digital literacy by 2030 (NITDA, 2023). NITDA's current digital literacy implementation agenda also emphasises partnerships, training, monitoring and the diffusion of digital skills across the country (NITDA, n.d.).

Given the availability of digital-literacy frameworks, the policy challenge is how digital competencies translate into responsible behaviour and meaningful participation. The ability to operate a device or create digital content does not necessarily imply the ability to evaluate information critically, obtain appropriate consent, protect privacy, represent others

responsibly or understand the social consequences of digital communication. UNESCO (2024) similarly emphasises that education in a digital age should equip learners to access, critically engage with, create and share information while developing the values and skills required for ethical and responsible participation.

This is increasingly relevant as artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies become integrated into everyday communication and learning. In March 2026, the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Education, launched the National Digital Economy Research Clusters Initiative, with thematic clusters covering digital skills and human capital, trust and safety, and AI alongside connectivity, digital public infrastructure, and jobs and the digital economy (FMCIDE, 2026). This creates a timely policy opportunity to strengthen the relationship between technical digital skills, ethical judgement and meaningful participation.

Experience from the Digital Storytelling for Ethical Technology and Intergenerational Collaboration project implemented in Kwara State by the Saving African Youths Dream Initiative (SAYDi) provides practical evidence for this discussion. This project used a combination of digital storytelling, practical media production, ethical reflection and structured interaction between younger and older participants to promote responsible digital literacy.



Project Design and Implementation



The project was implemented in Ilorin, Kwara State, as part of the BBC-CNN Dialogues, in partnership with the Hadis Foundation and Luminate. Its central premise was that digital storytelling could provide a practical entry point for developing responsible technology use while creating opportunities for intergenerational exchange.

The intervention comprised a three-day practical workshop and a subsequent public exhibition. Workshop sessions addressed media evolution, intergenerational dialogue, visual storytelling, documentary production, digital citizenship, social-media content creation, field ethics, consent, photography for cultural preservation, photography for social accountability, photo essays, fieldwork and editing.

The workshop involved 38 participants, comprising 17 younger participants and 21 older participants drawn from educational institutions, media organisations,

professional associations and other community institutions in Kwara State. The project subsequently culminated in a public exhibition attended by 235 people. The exhibition presented creative outputs addressing misinformation and critical thinking, health awareness, identity and inclusion, cultural preservation and youth-led digital advocacy. It also included a panel discussion on ethical storytelling, digital responsibility, generational perspectives, media, youth engagement and cultural preservation.

The project deliberately emphasised learning through practice. Participants were required to apply digital storytelling techniques to real-world situations, which allowed questions of consent, representation, information quality and responsibility to emerge within the process of creating and reviewing digital content.





Key Findings



01.

Ethical digital literacy requires more than technical proficiency

Outputs from the project suggest that digital literacy programmes can produce greater value when lessons on technical areas are connected to the decisions and responsibilities that accompany digital participation. These observations are also consistent with UNESCO's emphasis on critical thinking, ethical decision-making and responsible engagement as important dimensions of education in increasingly digital environments (UNESCO, 2024). Participants engaged with photography, storytelling and content production, but the project also required them to consider why content

was being created, how people were represented and what responsibilities accompany publication.

These impacts were reflected visibly in participant feedback. One participant reported that, before the workshop, photography involved taking pictures without substantial planning, whereas the training provided a clearer process for determining what to document and how to approach the subject. Another participant emphasised the need to recognise both the opportunities and responsibilities associated with AI.

02.

Practical learning can connect digital competence with responsible behaviour

The project's strongest engagement was associated with practical photography, fieldwork and editing. The project report indicates that these activities produced more visible learning than lecture-based approaches, while creative practice and social dialogue generated stronger engagement around ethical technology issues.

This has implications for the design of digital literacy programmes. Ethical principles can remain abstract if presented only through lectures or

guidelines. However, practical activities provide opportunities for participants to encounter the decisions that ethical digital participation requires. For instance, a photography exercise can introduce consent and representation; a documentary production can address interviewing, attribution and privacy; a social-media production can address verification and misinformation; and an AI-assisted content creation can provide an opportunity to examine transparency, bias and responsible use.



03.

Intergenerational learning can broaden the meaning of digital inclusion

The project also demonstrates the potential of intergenerational learning as a component of digital inclusion. Younger and older participants entered the discussion with different experiences of technology, media and social communication. The structured exchange created an opportunity for these differences to become sources of knowledge.

This approach is consistent with emerging international evidence on age-inclusive

digital learning. UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning has highlighted the importance of accessible, learner-centred and intergenerational approaches to digital learning for older adults, including opportunities for people of different generations to learn with and from one another (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning et al., 2025).

04.

Digital storytelling can connect skills development with civic participation

The project further demonstrates the potential of creative digital production to connect skills development with community and civic concerns. The exhibition outputs addressed misinformation, health awareness, identity, inclusion, cultural preservation and youth advocacy.

This expands the purpose of digital literacy beyond individual use or technology

adoption. The project demonstrated how digital storytelling can provide communities with practical means of documenting local experiences, preserving cultural knowledge, communicating public-interest information and participating in discussions about issues that affect them.





Policy Implications



The evidence from the Digital Storytelling and Intergenerational Collaboration project points towards a stronger implementation approach for Nigeria's digital-literacy framework, which should be built around three complementary principles which are:

Responsibility

Practice

Intergenerational participation.

Responsibility requires digital-literacy programmes to address the ethical decisions that accompany content creation and information sharing. Practice requires participants to demonstrate competencies through real-world tasks rather than relying primarily on classroom instruction. Finally, intergenerational participation recognises that digital inclusion can involve reciprocal learning across age groups rather than focusing exclusively on young people as beneficiaries.

Together, these principles provide a practical approach for strengthening implementation of the NDLF while responding to emerging concerns around misinformation, online harms, AI and unequal digital participation. They also align with the current policy emphasis on digital skills, trust and safety, and AI within Nigeria's digital-economy agenda (NITDA, 2023).





Recommendations

01.

Integrate ethical digital citizenshipship into digital-literacy implementation

NITDA and organisations implementing digital-skills programmes should make ethical digital citizenship an explicit component of training and assessment. Existing competencies in information and data literacy, digital content creation and safety can be operationalised through

practical instruction on consent, privacy, misinformation, attribution, representation, digital identity and responsible use of AI. This approach would strengthen the NDLF without creating a parallel framework.

02.

Institutionalise project-based learning within digital-skills programmes

Digital-skills interventions should incorporate practical projects through which participants demonstrate their ability to apply technical competencies to real situations. Photography projects, community documentaries, digital campaigns, verified social-media content

and local digital archives can provide opportunities to assess both technical proficiency and responsible decision-making. This would shift programme emphasis from completion of training towards demonstrated competence.

03.

Incorporate intergenerational learning into digital inclusion initiatives

Government agencies, educational institutions, civil society organisations and development partners should consider intergenerational learning as a deliberate design feature of digital-inclusion programmes. Programmes can pair digital skills with knowledge and experience held within communities, enabling younger participants to contribute contemporary

digital competencies while older participants contribute professional, cultural and community knowledge. Evidence from UNESCO's recent work on age-inclusive digital learning supports the value of such approaches (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning et al., 2025).

04.

Support community-based digital storytelling for civic and cultural purposes

Development partners, media organisations, cultural institutions and civil society organisations should support community-based digital storytelling through small grants, mentorship and technical assistance. Such initiatives can enable communities to document local

histories, cultural practices, public-interest issues and community priorities. Funding mechanisms should incorporate appropriate standards for consent, privacy, safeguarding and responsible representation.

05.

Strengthen outcome measurement beyond participation counts

Digital-literacy programmes should complement conventional indicators such as enrolment, attendance and completion with measures of applied competence. Monitoring frameworks should assess participants' ability to evaluate information, create content responsibly, protect privacy, identify misinformation, make ethical decisions, collaborate across

generations and apply digital tools to community or civic purposes. Such measures would provide a more meaningful assessment of whether digital-skills investments are producing responsible and capable digital participants.





Conclusion

Nigeria's digital transformation requires a population capable of using digital technologies, as well as evaluating information, creating responsibly, protecting rights and participating constructively in digital environments. The country's existing policy background provides a strong foundation for this objective, but implementation can be strengthened by giving greater practical attention to ethical digital citizenship, applied learning and intergenerational participation.

SAYDi's experience with the digital storytelling and intergenerational collaboration project provides a useful illustration of how these elements can be brought together. The findings indicate that practical activities can make ethical questions more tangible, that structured intergenerational exchange can support

reciprocal learning, and that digital storytelling can connect skills development with community and civic issues.

These findings should not be interpreted as evidence of national-scale impact. Rather, they provide a practical case from which policymakers, programme designers and development partners can consider how existing digital-literacy investments might be implemented more effectively.

The central policy proposition is therefore straightforward: Nigeria's digital-literacy agenda should move beyond the ability to use technology towards the ability to use it critically, ethically, creatively and collaboratively.

About SAYDi

Saving African Youths Dream Initiative (SAYDi) is a youth-led nonprofit organization that promotes inclusive development through research, education, democratic governance, digital inclusion, gender equity, and social justice. SAYDi works to strengthen the interface between citizens and institutions while advancing evidence-based solutions for sustainable development.



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