

# PRODUCTIVITY ON THE MOVE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL

JANUARY 2026



## NPCC Designated Center of Excellence in Kaizen

NPCC Celebrates  
NPQEA 2025  
WINNERS



Mauritius to host  
AKAC 2026

Launching of AI  
Startups Project



Interview  
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Africa



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**Nadine Pierre**

A journey of  
dedication to ELIT



# Welcome

Happy New Year and a warm welcome to the second edition of Productivity on the Move!

As we step into 2026, we do so with renewed energy and purpose. Building on our momentum, the NPCC is honoured and driven by our recent designation as a Centre of Excellence, a recognition that underscores our commitment to national progress. We have already begun implementing our new strategic plan for 2025–2029, a roadmap designed to deepen our impact, foster innovation and embed a culture of excellence across every sector of Mauritius.

This edition is a celebration of the progress we are making together. Mauritius continues to shine, ranking 1st in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Global Innovation Index 2025, while three of our local organisations have made us proud at the Africa Kaizen Awards 2025. At the same time, programmes such as ELIT Online are giving women new opportunities through digital and language literacy.

Our journey does not stop at our borders. Through partnerships like the one with the Japan Productivity Center, we are extending our expertise to support Malagasy enterprises, while workshops and training programmes in Mauritius are building problem-solving capacity and enhancing organisational excellence. This edition also offers rich insights into key trends shaping our economy, from a decade of competitiveness data to the integration of artificial intelligence into our productivity agenda.

These stories remind us that productivity is not just about doing more—it is about doing better. It is about empowering people, driving transformation and creating opportunities for growth. At the NPCC, we firmly believe that every citizen, every organisation and every community has a role to play in this movement.

We invite you to read, share and most importantly, act. Let these stories inspire you to rethink the way you work, innovate in your environment and contribute to building a culture of productivity that will carry Mauritius forward. Together, let us shape a future where our nation is not only competitive but also resilient, inclusive and globally admired.

Here's to a productive and transformative year ahead.

From the NPCC Team

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**AUDA-NEPAD**  
AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



# CERTIFICATE

**AFRICA KAIZEN INITIATIVE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**

This certificate is proudly presented to

*National Productivity and  
Competitiveness Council, Mauritius*

For the First Batch of Center of Excellence

Date of Designation : 28th October, 2025

**Amine Idriss Adoum**

Director of Infrastructure, Industrialization,  
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African Union Development Agency

New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD)

**SAITO Mikiya**

Director General

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## Mauritius at the Forefront of Productivity and Excellence in Africa

Mauritius made a remarkable impact on the continental stage at the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference (AKAC) 2025 in October 2025 in Johannesburg, South Africa, where the NPCC stood out as a leader in advancing productivity, innovation and continuous improvement. Through major milestones—including its official designation as an Africa Kaizen Centre of Excellence, outstanding achievements by Mauritian organisations at the Africa Kaizen Awards, the signing of a new Technical Cooperation Project with JICA and the prominent contributions of NPCC experts in shaping the Digital Kaizen agenda—the NPCC reaffirmed Mauritius’s position as a driving force for excellence, collaboration and transformative growth across Africa. >>

**>> NPCC ascends to prestigious status as an Africa Kaizen Centre of Excellence**

In a landmark achievement that solidifies its regional leadership, the NPCC has been officially designated as an Africa Kaizen Initiative (AKI) Centre of Excellence. The announcement was made during the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference (AKAC) 2025, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 27 to 29 October.



This prestigious designation recognises the NPCC as a leading organisation in championing Kaizen and Quality and Productivity Improvement (QPI) across the continent. As an AKI Centre of Excellence, the NPCC is now formally acknowledged as a premier source of expertise, leadership and best practices, committed to fostering a culture of continuous improvement and world-class productivity standards.

Through this recognition, Mauritius now stands proudly alongside Tunisia, South Africa and Ethiopia as one of the few nations to host an AKI Centre of Excellence. This initiative is a joint undertaking by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The NPCC's role in shaping the Kaizen landscape in Africa was further highlighted by its chairmanship of the Cross Functional Working Group, which was instrumental in preparing the official guidelines for the designation of Centres of Excellence.

A delegation from the NPCC, led by Executive Director Dr. Vinaye Ancharaz, represented Mauritius at the AKA conference. On this momentous occasion, Dr. Ancharaz shared his reflections: "This designation is a significant milestone in our organisation's journey and a powerful testament to the dedication of our team and our partners over the years. Being recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Kaizen in Africa is more than just an honour; it is a profound responsibility. It charges us with a greater mandate to spearhead the productivity movement, in Mauritius and across the African continent. We are committed to leveraging this status to deepen our knowledge exchange, enhance our capacity-building programmes and forge stronger collaborations to embed the principles of operational excellence into the fabric of African industries. This is a pivotal step in our shared mission to drive sustainable and inclusive economic transformation for our nation and our continent."

# Mauritius at the Forefront of Productivity and Excellence in Africa



>> Echoing this sentiment, Mrs. Françoise Marechal Charlotte, Head of Business Development and Consultancy, emphasised the practical implications of this new status for Mauritian enterprises: “As a Centre of Excellence, the NPCC is now even better positioned to be the go-to partner for our local businesses. This elevates our capacity to deliver cutting-edge consultancy and training, providing Mauritian organisations with the tools and methodologies they need to achieve breakthrough improvements in quality and efficiency. It is a recognition that directly translates into enhanced support for our private and public sectors as they strive for global competitiveness.”

This designation reaffirms the NPCC’s unwavering commitment to stimulating productivity and quality consciousness across all sectors of the economy, firmly establishing Mauritius as a beacon of innovation and excellence in Africa.

## Mauritian Excellence Shines at the Africa Kaizen Awards 2025

In a resounding testament to the NPCC’s commitment to quality and continuous improvement, three Mauritian organisations have achieved remarkable success at the prestigious Africa Kaizen Awards (AKA) 2025. The awards ceremony, held as a highlight of the AKAC in Johannesburg in October 2025, saw Mauritian institutions secure top honours, showcasing the tangible impact of the Kaizen philosophy across diverse sectors.

The Coronary Care Unit of Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital led the charge by winning the Outstanding Award, the highest accolade in its category. They were joined by the SS Business School and the Mauritius Prison Service, which each received the Excellent Award in the Small Organisation and Medium Organisation categories, respectively.

These awards recognise organisations that have implemented exceptional QPI or Kaizen practices, serving as model cases to be shared across the African continent.

The achievements of the Mauritian finalists are particularly compelling, demonstrating how Kaizen drives meaningful outcomes:



Coronary Care Unit, Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital (Outstanding Award): Beginning its Kaizen journey in 2019, the unit set an ambitious target to reduce waiting times for life-saving coronary angiography. Through problem analysis and standardised protocols, they slashed the average waiting time to just two days and achieved a staggering drop in the mortality rate—from 30% in 2019 to 2% in 2024. This is a powerful example of Kaizen directly saving lives and enhancing healthcare delivery. >>



>> SS Business School (Excellent Award): By embedding a culture of continuous improvement from its inception and formally establishing a Kaizen & Quality Circle Committee, the school has seen dramatic results. Their strategic Kaizen projects led to a jump in student satisfaction from 78% to 92% and improved course completion rates from 72% to 88% between 2021 and 2024.



Mauritius Prison Service (Excellent Award): The MPS demonstrated innovative Kaizen application by targeting operational costs, 80% of which were attributed to food. Through sustainable initiatives like in-house agriculture, they now produce 40% of their vegetables and 100% of their green spices, eggs, chicken and bread. This initiative not only reduced costs but also reinforced dynamic security by positively engaging detainees.

All three organisations were previously recognised at the national level through the National Productivity and Quality Excellence Award 2024 and were nominated by the NPCC to compete on the continental stage. Their success highlights the vibrant culture of productivity and excellence that the NPCC continues to foster in Mauritius.

To have our institutions recognised among the best in Africa across such varied fields—healthcare, education, and public service—proves that the principles of Kaizen are universally applicable and powerfully effective. They are true ambassadors of our national drive towards operational excellence.

The outstanding performance of these Mauritian organisations at the AKA 2025 not only celebrates their individual journeys of continuous improvement but also solidifies Mauritius’s position as a regional leader in championing productivity and quality for sustainable economic and social development.

### **Mauritius and JICA Strengthen Kaizen Collaboration with signing of Record of Minutes**

In a significant step to further entrench a culture of continuous improvement in the region, a Record of Minutes for a new Technical Cooperation Project was signed between the Ministry of Industry, SME and Cooperatives of the Republic of Mauritius and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Tokyo. The signing ceremony took place on Monday, 27 October 2025, on the sidelines of the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference (AKAC) 2025 in Johannesburg.

This pivotal Technical Cooperation Project was initially developed through a collaborative effort between the NPCC and JICA during the 2022–2023 period. The project is strategically designed to amplify the dissemination of the Kaizen approach within Mauritius and extend its benefits to neighbouring countries, reinforcing the NPCC’s new role as an AKI Centre of Excellence.

The cooperation falls under the framework of the broader Agreement signed between the Government of Mauritius and JICA on 31 July 2023. It is important to note that all approved JICA Technical Cooperation projects are formally implemented in accordance with the Basic Principles (BP) and the Record of Discussions (R/D), which are signed directly between the Government of Mauritius, represented by the Ministry of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives and JICA. >>

# Mauritius at the Forefront of Productivity and Excellence in Africa



>> The signing of this Record of Minutes in Johannesburg marks a crucial procedural milestone, paving the way for the formal implementation of the project. It underscores the shared commitment of the Government of Mauritius and JICA to leverage Kaizen methodologies as a powerful tool for enhancing productivity, competitiveness and sustainable economic growth both nationally and regionally.

This collaboration signifies a deepening of the long-standing partnership and directly supports the NPCC’s mandate to stimulate productivity and quality consciousness across all economic sectors, further solidifying Mauritius’s position as a hub for operational excellence in Africa.



## NPCC Experts Spearhead Digital Kaizen Agenda at AKAC 2025

The NPCC delegation played a leading role in shaping the continental conversation on Digital Kaizen (DK) at the Capacity Enhancement Program III (CEP III) in the margins of AKAC 2025. Mrs. Françoise Marechal Charlotte, Mrs. Padmini Busgeet and Mrs. Sneha Ramsohok collectively drove knowledge transfer and showcased Mauritius’s pioneering expertise, reinforcing the NPCC’s position as a key Centre of Excellence.

Mrs. Françoise Marechal Charlotte, Head of Business Development and Consultancy, was a prominent figure throughout the program, serving as the official moderator for the core plenary sessions. Her leadership steered critical discussions on strategic planning for Centres of Excellence and the integration of gender-inclusive approaches within Kaizen consulting. In a dedicated session, Mrs. Marechal Charlotte presented on the challenges and opportunities for female Kaizen consultants and female workers in client companies, positioning the NPCC at the forefront of developing inclusive and holistic productivity strategies for Africa.

Mrs. Padmini Busgeet laid the essential groundwork by leading the foundational “Digital Kaizen Orientation” session. Her expertise was instrumental in establishing a common understanding of key concepts like Digital, Digitalization, and DK among all participants. She effectively illustrated the driving forces behind this new era of continuous improvement, ensuring that both managers and practitioners from across the continent started from a unified knowledge base.

Demonstrating the NPCC’s advanced technical capabilities, Mrs. Sneha Ramsohok led a highly practical session on “Digital Maturity Assessment and Transition in SMEs.” She equipped fellow practitioners with tangible techniques to assess the digital readiness of businesses, identify strengths and chart a clear path for the transition from analog Kaizen to data-driven Digital Kaizen. Furthermore, Mrs. Ramsohok took the stage on the final day to present the “Experience of Mauritius,” sharing the NPCC’s real-world case studies and successes, which served as a vital practical model for other nations to emulate. >>

The prominent contributions of these three experts at CEP III 2025 highlight the depth of talent and expertise within the NPCC. Their active roles in mentoring, training and sharing Mauritius's success story not only empower other African nations but also solidify the NPCC's reputation as a leading force in driving the future of productivity and Digital Kaizen across the continent.

### **About the AKAC**

The AKAC is a premier continental platform dedicated to advancing Quality and Productivity Improvement (QPI) and Kaizen practices across Africa. A joint initiative of the AUDA-NEPAD and the JICA, the conference brings together policymakers, academics, and practitioners to foster policy advocacy, mutual learning, and the co-creation of African-led strategies for industrial development.

Held under the theme "African Industrialization through Fostering Competitive Firms and Value Chains on the Continent," AKAC 2025 aimed to strengthen business competitiveness by sharing knowledge, showcasing successes, and recognizing excellence through the Africa Kaizen Awards. The event serves as a critical forum for promoting the Kaizen movement as a key driver for economic transformation, innovation, and sustainable growth in Africa.

## **MAURITIUS TO HOST AKAC 2026**

Government has agreed to Mauritius hosting the AKAC 2026 on 14 November 2025, following a request from the JICA and in collaboration with the AUDA-NEPAD. The AKAC, a flagship event of the African Kaizen Initiative, features high-level panel discussions on thematic areas, along with site visits to local organisations that have demonstrated strong Kaizen implementation. The conference will conclude with the Africa Kaizen Awards and it will be followed by the Capacity Enhancement Programme IV for management and productivity practitioners. Recognised as a premier continental platform, the event brings together policymakers, academics and productivity and quality improvement practitioners to exchange knowledge, share best practices and advance the adoption of the Kaizen approach across the region through policy advocacy, mutual learning and the co-creation of African-driven solutions to enhance enterprise capabilities and competitiveness.



**NPQEA**  
**2025**

**NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY  
AND QUALITY EXCELLENCE AWARD**

# NPCC Celebrates NPQEA 2025 Winners



The spotlight shone brightly on champions of productivity and innovation as the NPCC proudly announced the Grand Winners of the National Productivity and Quality Excellence Award (NPQEA) 2025. These remarkable organisations stood out for their ingenuity, resilience and unwavering pursuit of excellence, earning the highest honours from among this year’s Gold Award recipients.

The Grand Winners of NPQEA 2025 are:

Category  
**Small & Medium Private Enterprises, including Micro Enterprises**

Company: Ken & Nish  
Title of project: Reviving a bakery business and bringing new hope to a community in difficult times



Category  
**Mid-Market & Large Private Enterprises**

Company: Plastinax Austral Ltd (Ex aequo)  
Title of project: Cutting-edge initiatives in plastic waste reduction and recycling



Company: Cervonic Ltd (Ex aequo)  
Title of project: Pioneering advancements in reducing MOAH in cold-extracted tuna oil to ensure compliance and sustainable growth



Category

**Government Bodies, Parastatals and Registered Associations**

**Government Body:** Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-MU)

**Title of project:** The Mauritius Honeynet Project, reinforcing national cybersecurity readiness



These organisations embody the spirit of innovation, dedication and continuous improvement—values at the heart of the NPQEA.

**Celebrating Excellence Across Mauritius**

This year, the NPCC honoured 50 outstanding organisations for their exceptional strides in productivity and quality. Each winner—whether at Bronze, Silver or Gold level—demonstrated remarkable effort in strengthening systems, refining processes and cultivating a culture rooted in discipline, innovation and operational excellence.

The awards spanned three key categories: Mid-Market & Large Organisations, Micro & SMEs, and Government Bodies, Parastatals & Registered Associations. The ceremony brought together a vibrant community of leaders, professionals and stakeholders from across Mauritius, united in celebrating the nation’s most inspiring success stories.

**A Showcase of Best Practices and Breakthroughs**

The NPQEA, one of NPCC’s flagship initiatives, continues to stand as a national beacon for growth and transformation. It encourages organisations to showcase their best practices, innovative solutions and operational breakthroughs, fostering a dynamic ecosystem based on knowledge sharing, collaboration and continuous learning.

The journey began with an intensive training programme in August, welcoming 84 participants eager to strengthen their capabilities. By September, the NPCC had received submissions from 50 organisations—each detailing impactful projects and bold ideas.

The assessment phase, conducted through a series of rigorous online evaluations from 23 to 26 September and onsite visits from 13 to 17 October, was led by panels of respected local jurors. Their comprehensive reviews ensured that every winning organisation truly earned its place on the NPQEA stage. The Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives, Hon. Aadil Ameer Meea, delivered an inspiring message, reflecting on the transformative power of innovation and quality. *“In a world shaped by relentless change and global competition, the strength of an economy is defined not by how hard we work, but by how smartly we operate, how quickly we adapt and how consistently we commit to excellence.”*

He urged Mauritius to nurture a robust national culture of excellence—one rooted in efficiency, creativity and pride across all sectors, from SMEs to large industries and public institutions.

In his welcome address, Dr. Vinaye Ancharaz, Executive Director of the NPCC, highlighted the enduring impact of the NPQEA: *“The NPQEA remains a vital platform for learning and transformation. This year’s participants have embraced practical, tailored solutions that strengthen their culture of excellence and enhance their competitiveness in an evolving economic landscape.”*

**Shaping National Competitiveness for the Future**

This year’s Gold Awardees and Grand Winners will represent Mauritius in prestigious regional and international arenas, including the International Convention on Quality Control Circle (ICQCC) in Bangladesh from 19–21 November 2026 and the Africa Kaizen Awards next October.



# INTERVIEW

## **Kaizen for a New Africa: Merging Tradition and Technology for Sustainable Growth**

**Mr. Getahun Tadesse,**  
Former Director General of the Ethiopian Kaizen Institute (EKI) with  
Dr Vinaye Ancharaz, Executive Director of the NPCC



**What is the future of productivity and sustainable development in Africa? In our search for answers, we gathered insights from a foremost authority on the subject.**

**In an interview with our Communications Specialist, Debesh Beedasy, renowned Kaizen expert Mr. Getahun Tadesse, former Director General of the Ethiopian Kaizen Institute (EKI), explains how the fusion of classic Kaizen methods with digital innovation and climate-smart strategies is creating a new model for progress. Discover key insights on topics ranging from leveraging the AfCFTA to the real-world implementation of Green and Digital Kaizen.**

**You pioneered the Ethiopian Kaizen Institute and adapted Japan's Kaizen model to Africa. Tell us about your journey.**

Kaizen was first introduced to Ethiopia in 2009 through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). From the outset, it proved to be a powerful tool for reform, quickly gaining acceptance among companies eager to improve their productivity and quality standards. The initial pilot project involved 30 companies and 10 Kaizen unit members, including myself. The encouraging results demonstrated the readiness of Ethiopian enterprises to embrace new approaches.

Building on this success, the Ethiopian government established the EKI in 2011 to expand and institutionalise the movement. I had the honour of serving as its first Director General until my retirement in 2017. During this period, we recruited highly ranked university graduates and professionals with hands-on industry experience. Between 2011 and 2014, an additional 57 Ethiopian Kaizen consultants and 133 trainers from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes were trained.

EKI launched the Kaizen movement across large-scale industries such as sugar, textile and leather, with trained consultants leading the way. The results were both quantitative and qualitative: productivity gains worth hundreds of millions of USD each year, stronger teamwork, improved labour–management relations, and a remarkable shift in workplace attitudes.

Our vision extended beyond Ethiopia. After the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) V, we proposed the establishment of a Kaizen/Industrial Human Resource Development Center to serve Africa as a whole. With the support of the Government of Japan, this vision materialised and the center was inaugurated during the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference (AKAC) 2023 in Ethiopia.

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# Kaizen for a New Africa: Merging Tradition and Technology for Sustainable Growth

[continued]

INTERVIEW



From 2015 to 2020, the third project phase focused on transferring advanced Kaizen knowledge. Ninety consultants were trained and about 30 companies from earlier phases progressed to advanced Kaizen. To ensure sustainability, EKI partnered with local universities to develop a national capacity-building programme, enabling many Kaizen consultants to graduate with MSc degrees in Kaizen.

We also crafted a 15-year Kaizen Transfer and Development Roadmap (2011–2025), aligned with Ethiopia’s Growth and Transformation Plan. This roadmap provided models and strategies for embedding Kaizen in Ethiopian industries. By the time I left office in 2016, the Institute had grown to 153 employees, including 107 consultants—65 men and 42 women—representing a 30% increase within three years.

Today, the legacy continues as the EKI evolves into the Kaizen Excellence Center (KEC), carrying forward the mission of driving productivity and transformation in Ethiopia and beyond.

Despite Kaizen’s success in some sectors, scaling productivity reforms across Africa remains challenging.

From your experience, what are the critical barriers (e.g., cultural, institutional) to implementing such frameworks continent-wide?

From my experience, three main barriers stand out as follows:

## i. Mindset

As with any change initiative, there are early adopters, laggards and resisters. Some companies hesitate to begin implementation even after selection and planning, fearing that training and Kaizen activities will disrupt production. Others remain comfortable with the status quo, particularly since local markets often absorb low-quality or low-productivity outputs without consequence.

To address this, the EKI invested significant effort in convincing managers and workers of Kaizen’s unique benefits—not only for company performance but also for individual growth and self-improvement. Through sustained dialogue and demonstration, attitudes gradually shifted, with some companies quickly embracing and committing to the process.

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**>> ii. Securing Leadership Commitment**

Globally, Kaizen has succeeded only where business owners and managers demonstrate clear and sustained commitment. Ethiopia was no exception. In companies where leaders were fully engaged, improvements proved sustainable. Conversely, organisations with hesitant or half-hearted leadership often abandoned the process early, undermining potential gains.

**iii. Building and Expanding Knowledge**

Another challenge lay in the depth of institutional learning. While JICA experts provided valuable training, some consultants and managers tended to rely heavily on the original materials—without adapting or expanding them for different audiences and contexts. A few were reluctant to go beyond the basics, missing opportunities to customise approaches, document local cases or contribute new insights. Effective Kaizen requires continuous learning, critical thinking and adaptation—principles that need reinforcement to avoid stagnation.

**More specifically, what lessons can Ethiopia teach to other African countries in adopting Kaizen practices to address productivity gaps?**

Drawing lessons from the experience of a given country is not an easy task. However, some 'takeaway' for success are as follows:

1. Strong commitment of top leadership at all levels;
2. Establishment of a national organisational framework with a clear vision, mission and leadership;
3. Optimum utilisation of Kaizen projects;
4. Grassroot-level promotion with the help of public and private media, news papers, awareness training for ministers, high officials, parliament members, Corporation CEOs, etc.;

5. Customisation and standardisation of training programmes and materials;
6. Development of capable consultants;
7. Establishment of systems of performance audit, recognition and awards; and
8. Sustaining Kaizen activities.

**How can Kaizen principles address Africa's productivity gaps, and what lessons from Ethiopia could other African nations adopt?**

Kaizen improves productivity in a step-by-step, incremental and progressive manner. While it has been applied most extensively in the manufacturing sector, it has also proven effective in health, education, public administration, and other services. Its principles are versatile enough to be applied across micro and small enterprises as well as medium and large firms—whether in offices, retail shops, service counters, workshops or garages across Africa.

Ethiopia's experience shows that for Kaizen to take root, governments must prioritise awareness-building by offering free training programmes to business communities and establishing model factories to showcase best practices. Equally important is the training of trainers, who can support managers and engineers in firms willing to adopt Kaizen.

Another critical lesson is the need for a structured dissemination plan that aligns Kaizen implementation with national development strategies and company growth objectives. When Kaizen is embedded within broader policy and business frameworks, it attracts stronger commitment from governments and business owners, thereby ensuring wider adoption and sustainable impact. >>

# Kaizen for a New Africa: Merging Tradition and Technology for Sustainable Growth

[continued]

INTERVIEW



## How crucial are international partnerships (e.g., Japan-Africa) in transferring knowledge and tools to boost productivity, and where could these efforts improve?

JICA has played a pivotal role in supporting quality and productivity improvement across Africa. As early as the 1990s, Botswana began introducing Kaizen, followed by Egypt, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon, Senegal, Sudan and the Republic of the Congo. Most JICA-led projects were launched after 2005, during a period of relatively high economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Kaizen model that JICA has been transferring to Africa combines a wide range of methodologies and tools. Customisation is a key part of this process and usually involves:

- Selecting the most relevant tools based on the prevailing challenges in target companies.
- Modifying operational rules in light of management–labour relations and specific social contexts.
- Reformulating methods to align with broader

social systems such as education, employment, and economic trends.

Today, other international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) have also adopted Kaizen principles to pursue their objectives. Moreover, JICA, in collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD, is working to establish designated Centres of Excellence (CoEs) under the Africa Kaizen Initiative (AKI). The vision behind this initiative is to enable African countries to support each other, with designated institutions disseminating Kaizen practices to neighbouring nations.

From my perspective, however, Africa has not moved forward as quickly as it should in capitalising on this support. There is a pressing need for quicker learning, deeper adaptation to local contexts, and stronger ownership of dissemination efforts. Scaling up must increasingly be driven by African institutions themselves.

To achieve this, networking and knowledge-sharing are vital. Stronger collaboration and exchange of best practices among productivity-promoting institutions would help accelerate learning. The role of the Pan-African Productivity Association (PAPA) should also be reinforced to foster greater cooperation and collective progress across the continent. >>

## Many African enterprises are SMEs with limited resources. How can Kaizen or similar methodologies convince small businesses to prioritize productivity amid competing survival challenges?

In the 1960s, even in Japan, SMEs were often viewed by leading economists as a burden on economic growth. Yet, this perception changed drastically when SMEs became the driving force behind Japan's industrial competitiveness. This transformation coincided with the widespread diffusion of Kaizen across the SME sector.

Kaizen offers practical solutions for entrepreneurs who may lack financial resources or access to a highly skilled workforce. By focusing on waste elimination, reducing rework and rejects and improving processes, Kaizen enables SMEs to generate internal revenue and improve competitiveness. It also functions as an effective on-the-job training tool, upgrading workers' skills while instilling a positive, improvement-oriented mindset. Despite these benefits, Kaizen is often misunderstood as a burden—largely due to lack of awareness.

Governments therefore have a critical role to play. They can support SMEs through institutional arrangements such as establishing dedicated Kaizen or Quality and Productivity Improvement (QPI) organisations, allocating adequate resources, and promoting nationwide productivity movements with strong leadership commitment. Countries like Singapore and Ethiopia have shown how effective such institutional backing can be. Across Africa, similar structures already exist in various forms—National Productivity Organisations (NPOs), technical centres, or SME agencies—but they require greater

government attention to build sustainable technical capacity, particularly in machinery operation, maintenance and Kaizen dissemination.

Financial support is equally vital. Preferential schemes such as equipment financing, leasing options, working capital support, and business expansion loans are necessary complements to Kaizen. On its own, Kaizen cannot solve every challenge SMEs face—it must be reinforced with access to finance, continuous skills upgrading, and market development until businesses can operate independently and sustainably.

Finally, experience shows that the Kaizen mindset emerges gradually through continuous practice and visible results. When entrepreneurs and workers see improvements firsthand, their confidence grows, motivating them to set higher goals. The participatory nature of Kaizen also allows tools and methods to be customised to local contexts, which often sparks innovative practices. This mindset shift—rooted in participation, learning, and achievement—can become the foundation for sustained change and productivity growth among African SMEs.

## You have worked at both policy and operational levels. What would be a more effective approach for Africa: top-down government-led productivity strategies or bottom-up grassroots adoption by firms?

It is not a matter of choosing one over the other—both are essential. The real question is where to start. History offers useful lessons. >>

# Kaizen for a New Africa: Merging Tradition and Technology for Sustainable Growth

[continued]

INTERVIEW



For example, Singapore’s national productivity movement in the 1980s was driven by a top-down approach, with the late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew as its chief promoter. Government agencies systematically rolled out programmes across public and private sectors, laying the foundation for a national culture of productivity.

In Africa, JICA-supported quality and productivity initiatives have largely followed this top-down model. Ethiopia’s success with Kaizen, for instance, was made possible by strong government commitment, mirroring the experience of several Asian Productivity Organization (APO) member countries. In these cases, governments played a catalytic role by introducing Kaizen systematically and often establishing dedicated public institutions to promote productivity improvement.

However, policy alone is not enough. For Kaizen to succeed at the firm level, implementation must be participatory. Employees need to take ownership through Quality Control Circles (QCCs), suggestion systems, and idea generation schemes, ensuring that top-down direction is complemented by bottom-up engagement. Once firms achieve improvements, they must also be encouraged to sustain gains through continuous improvement practices.

At a more advanced stage, the development of private consulting firms becomes critical. SMEs, in particular, should be encouraged to rely less on government support and more on private sector expertise, building self-reliance and competitiveness.

This is why I argue it is not an “either/or” question but a both/and strategy. First, productivity improvement requires strong commitment from policymakers and leaders. Second, it needs an institutional framework for policy coordination. Third, it calls for the nurturing of private management consultants who can support firms in the long term. Together, these elements form the backbone of a sustainable productivity movement—just as was observed in Singapore.

## With Africa’s bulging youthful population, how can education systems or vocational training integrate Kaizen-like thinking to foster a culture of continuous improvement early on?

Kaizen principles can be applied anywhere—even at home. From my experience, we, at the EKI, trained kindergarten teachers after observing how children were nurtured in Japanese kindergartens. The focus was on helping children learn self-reliance: organising their belongings, keeping themselves clean, feeding and dressing independently, and developing responsibility at an early age. We introduced simple Kaizen tools such as 5S, the 3MUs (Muda, Muri, Mura), and visual management systems not only in kindergartens but also in elementary schools, high schools, and universities. >>

At the TVET level, we incorporated both basic and advanced Kaizen into the curriculum.

This approach supported the broader Human Resource Development (HRD) goal of producing a competent and future-ready workforce. By instilling Kaizen thinking from early childhood through to higher education, we aimed to nurture a generation with a culture of continuous improvement.

A key model developed by EKI was the Training of Trainers (ToT) programme for TVET instructors, enabling them to enhance quality and productivity improvement in micro and small enterprises (MSEs). Since most TVET graduates either enter SMEs or establish their own businesses, equipping trainers with Kaizen methodologies created a multiplier effect. This strategy, backed by JICA's second Kaizen project, ensured that Kaizen principles were systematically transferred to the grassroots level of the economy.

## **When evaluating technological advancements, policy reforms, and cultural shifts, how would you assess the evolution of Africa's productivity by the end of the next decade?**

First, we must clearly understand the scope of current technological advancements, where they are heading, and what they mean for Africa—the opportunities they present, as well as the responsibilities they place on us.

The cultural implications of these changes are particularly crucial, as they will deeply influence future generations. To stay competitive, we need to redefine our comparative advantages, identify catch-up opportunities, anticipate risks, and embed countermeasures in our policy reforms.

This will not be easy, especially in today's uncertain global environment—but it is essential for survival and growth.

Africa's greatest hope lies in its resource endowments and human capital. Our continent benefits from a diverse climate, rich ecology, and abundant mineral resources. Looking ahead, quality education, efficient reforestation programmes, climate-smart agriculture and industry, and digitally supported initiatives such as smart cities and smart tourism can serve as major drivers of productivity evolution. These are the pathways for Africa to rise on the global productivity ladder and avoid being left behind.

Equally important is the productivity of the public sector. No vision of Africa's future productivity can be complete without efficient, accountable, and digitally enabled state institutions. Strengthening service delivery systems, enhancing human resource development, and maintaining peace and stability must be central to public sector reforms. Raising government productivity—especially in the quality and accessibility of services—will be indispensable to driving Africa's overall productivity transformation in the coming decade.

## **As automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) reshape global productivity, how can Africa blend traditional Kaizen methods with emerging technologies to create a uniquely competitive advantage?**

Traditionally, Kaizen has significantly improved quality and productivity in SMEs by leveraging human ingenuity. >>

# Kaizen for a New Africa: Merging Tradition and Technology for Sustainable Growth

[continued]

INTERVIEW



However, with the growing importance of digital technology and the rapid advancement of AI, integrating these tools with traditional Kaizen has become essential. This fusion, known as Digital Kaizen, enhances our ability to harness complete information and enables rapid, real-time processing. Since data-driven decision-making is a core principle of Kaizen, digital technology facilitates more accurate and faster data collection and analysis.

The adoption of Digital Kaizen does not alter the fundamental principles, tools, or systems of Kaizen itself. While the essence of Kaizen is timeless, digital technology evolves rapidly. Therefore, reskilling is critical to learning and applying Digital Kaizen effectively. Without acquiring these new digital skills, implementation becomes difficult. It is important to note that a firm does not need to be fully digitalised to begin using Digital Kaizen; digitalisation is not a prerequisite. In fact, implementing Kaizen can often pave the way for adopting more advanced technologies.

This potential extends to the public sector. As in private industry, digitisation and data analytics can drive step-change improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and citizen satisfaction—often simultaneously. For Africa to seize this opportunity, investment in Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is crucial. DPI creates the foundational systems needed to connect more businesses, improve government service delivery and promote inclusive access to and use of digital and AI services.

To be efficient, effective, acceptable and timely, it is essential to integrate and initiate Digital Kaizen. This approach creates the possibility for dual application, which is particularly valuable for African nations currently digitalizing their economies and public services. Digital Kaizen actively integrates rapidly evolving technologies into continuous improvement activities, fully exploiting their capabilities to achieve both digital transformation and operational optimisation.

**The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to unlock markets and boost intra-African trade and economic prosperity. From your experience, how can cross-border collaboration under AfCFTA actively enhance productivity—not just trade volume?**

I will answer this question from the viewpoint of rational firm common sense. Participation in the AfCFTA will naturally boost both cooperation and competition. >>

Commodities moving across borders will differ in type, quality and embodied productivity, which is reflected in price differentiation. These differences stem from variations in technical capability, technology used, human skills and awareness of quality and productivity excellence.

Naturally, if a firm receives a product similar to its own but at a more competitive price, it will seek to identify the missing link. This initiates a process of technology transfer and product development through methods such as copying, reverse engineering, redesigning, reskilling workers and improving craftsmanship. Such endeavours can be undertaken by any firm engaged in cross-border trade and active competition, often with support from export promotion organisations. Trade fairs and exhibitions provide another avenue for this productive learning.

This is the very path that Japan and its firms successfully navigated in the 1950s and 1960s, and it holds true for African countries today. We must view this competitive learning among our firms as a healthy process that improves not only their own productivity but also contributes to the continuous improvement of continental productivity, thereby enhancing Africa's position on the world market.

Another point worth mentioning is the opportunity to trade based on comparative advantage. For instance, one country may have a comparative advantage in supplying hydroelectric power, while another manufactures products at reasonable costs—potentially lower than global prices. This synergy can lower production costs and enhance productivity for both trading partners.

**Climate-smart industries are gaining traction. Can Kaizen principles be adapted to promote resource efficiency and circular economies in Africa without compromising growth?**

The concept of “climate-smart industries” must be understood within the African context, where it is primarily synonymous with climate-smart agriculture. This focus is essential for ensuring local food security by enhancing the quality, productivity and profitability of the agricultural sector, which supports over 70% of the continent's population and feeds the remaining 30% in urban areas. This approach integrates a suite of sustainable practices, including maintaining soil health and promoting carbon sequestration, agro-forestry, improved range management, and the use of climate-resilient crop varieties. It also involves implementing efficient water conservation systems and adopting precision agriculture technologies, such as sensors and data analytics, to optimise outputs.

Within this framework, resource efficiency refers to the minimisation of waste across all agricultural activities and products. It entails the highly productive and effective use of inputs to reduce costs throughout the entire value chain, a principle that is equally vital for industrial production processes. Similarly, the circular economy model—simplified as “extract-manufacture-use-reuse”—is highly applicable to Africa. It can be seen in the lifecycle of minerals, from extraction and processing to manufacturing, use, repair and recycling and is equally relevant to sectors like agro-processing, textiles and leather goods.

Fundamentally, the principles of climate-smart agriculture, resource efficiency and the circular economy are all predicated on improving the quality and productivity of processes and outputs, reducing resource costs and leveraging digital technologies for data-driven decision-making. Given that these are the core domains of Kaizen, we can confidently assert that both traditional and Digital Kaizen are among the most effective tools available to advance and even leapfrog Africa's development along a sustainable and efficient economic path. Specifically, Kaizen drives progress in the circular economy by systematically reducing waste, optimizing resource use and fostering the continuous improvement in quality and productivity that underpins data-driven design, integrated product development and innovation.



# Train the Trainer for On-the-Job Trainers: Advancing Organisational Capability

The NPCC hosted a highly successful two-day workshop titled “Train the Trainer for On-the-Job Trainers” on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2025.

>> The two-day “Train the Trainer for On-the-Job Trainers” workshop was conducted on 16 and 17 July, equipping participants with enhanced skills to deliver effective workplace training. The event brought together professionals from various sectors, all committed to improving their instructional capabilities.

The sessions included practical exercises allowing participants to conduct training needs analyses and develop structured session plans. Group discussions surfaced common challenges faced in on-the-job training environments, with participants sharing experiences and solutions. These hands-on sessions enabled participants to refine their delivery techniques and develop customized training materials tailored to their specific workplace contexts.



“

*I really loved the interactive methods applied in the workshop. What’s also interesting is you get to learn how people from other organisations approach training.*

**Ibrahim Bauluck**

Participant

“



*The workshop allowed me to discover what it takes to become a good trainer and spot areas where we can increase and share knowledge among employees. I must also add that the way the training has been conducted is really professional.*

**Abhimanyu Nowbuth**

Participant

**For upcoming courses,  
visit [www.npccmauritius.org](http://www.npccmauritius.org)  
or call 467 77 00 for more information**



# Integrating Artificial Intelligence into Mauritius's Productivity Agenda

by

**Debesh Beedasy**

Communications, Public Relations and Marketing Specialist,  
NPCC

Forget the sugar cane fields that once defined our economic landscape. The next harvest for Mauritius will be reaped from data, powered by algorithms and cultivated in the cloud. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept from science fiction; it is the most potent economic catalyst of our generation and it is knocking on our door. This isn't just about automating tasks; it's about fundamentally rewiring our industries for enhanced productivity, supercharging our startups and forging a new competitive identity on the global stage. But to seize this future, we must first confront the gaps in our infrastructure, skills and strategy. In this feature, we sit down with the experts leading the charge to map out the opportunities, the obstacles and the actionable roadmap for building an AI-driven Mauritius. The future is intelligent. The time to act is now.

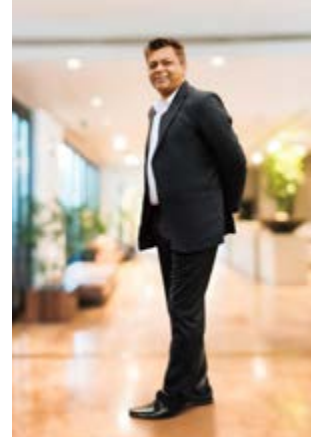
Recognising this immense potential, the Government of Mauritius has laid a comprehensive foundation to strategically integrate AI across the nation's economic and social fabric. As outlined in the recent budget speech, a multi-pronged approach is being implemented to propel this vision forward. This includes the establishment of a dedicated AI Unit within the Ministry of Information Technology, Communications and Innovation to spearhead an AI Innovation Start-Up Programme and accelerate our digital transition. Demonstrating a commitment to lead by example, the government intends to equip all ministries with AI tools to enhance policy-making and public services, backed by an initial investment of Rs 25 million for a Public Sector AI Programme. Moreover, to spur private sector adoption, Start-Ups and MSMEs will be incentivised with tax deductions of up to Rs 150,000 on investments in AI technologies. >>

## **AI at its CORE**

While the recent buzz around AI has often been synonymous with conversational chatbots like ChatGPT and DeepSeek, its true scope is vastly broader and more profound. At its core, AI is a multidisciplinary field of computer science dedicated to creating systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. This includes machine learning, where algorithms learn from data to predict outcomes and identify patterns; computer vision, which allows machines to 'see' and interpret images for quality control or diagnostics; and predictive analytics, which can optimise supply chains and forecast market trends. It is this extensive toolkit—far more than any single application—that holds the transformative power to revolutionise entire industries, from agriculture and manufacturing to finance and healthcare, by driving unprecedented gains in efficiency, innovation and productivity.



# Integrating Artificial Intelligence into Mauritius's Productivity Agenda [continued]



Furthermore, building a future-ready workforce is a key priority, with the implementation of National AI Policy Guidelines in schools, the launch of an AI Proficiency Programme for educators and students, and the integration of AI as a mandatory module in all public higher education curricula. Finally, the strategy extends to critical sectors like agriculture, where producers, especially SMEs, will be provided access to AI to modernise operations, improve food safety, and bolster national food sovereignty. (Source: Budget Speech 2025)

Building directly upon the budget's foundational measures, the recently unveiled Digital Transformation Blueprint for Mauritius by the Ministry of Information Technology, Communications and Innovation provides the comprehensive strategic framework to guide this national AI transformation. The blueprint outlines an ambitious yet structured plan, central to which is the formulation of a National AI Strategy and the establishment of a dedicated AI Unit to act as a cross-cutting enabler, integrating AI responsibly across all sectors. It commits to developing a National AI Policy grounded in principles of trust, transparency and ethical use, directly responding to UNESCO's recommendations. The strategy aims to position Mauritius as a regional hub for ethical AI, with concrete initiatives ranging from implementing AI-powered public services like job-matching and intelligent automation, to creating regulatory sandboxes, fostering PPPs for an AI Tech Park, and applying AI to critical areas like climate action and smart agriculture, ensuring the nation's growth is both technologically advanced and sustainable.

(Source: ICT Blueprint)

This proactive and wide-ranging governmental démarche is not merely aspirational; it is a strategic necessity justified by compelling international economic evidence. As highlighted in an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report in April 2024 on 'The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Productivity, Distribution and Growth', AI possesses the demonstrable potential to revive sluggish productivity growth—a crucial advantage for an economy like Mauritius aiming to ascend the value chain.

Furthermore, the European Central Bank's analysis, 'AI can boost productivity – if firms use it' in March 2025, underscores a critical precondition: adoption is the essential catalyst for impact. The report clarifies that maximal gains are realised when firms complement AI adoption with investment in human skills and intangible assets, precisely the areas targeted by Mauritius's educational reforms and SME tax incentives. By simultaneously fostering public sector adoption, incentivising private investment and building foundational skills, Mauritius's strategy is directly aligned with global prescriptions to not just adopt AI, but to harness it as a definitive multiplier for national productivity, competitiveness and long-term economic resilience. >>



We then turn to the critical questions:

### **How prepared are we to implement this ambitious strategy, and what remains to be done to translate it into tangible economic transformation?**

To explore the current state of AI in Mauritius and the road ahead, we spoke with experts in the field. Mr. Heman Mohabeer, Director of Africa Intelligence, offered a candid assessment.

“There is a genuine willingness from the government to promote AI in order to enhance our national productivity. The opportunities are present and we must seize them. However, we must also ensure that the necessary elements and resources are available to capitalise on these opportunities in the AI domain,” states Mr. Mohabeer. “For instance, we have promising foundations, such as the educational sector’s drive to train students in AI and government measures aimed at integrating AI into public and private processes.”

When asked to estimate a timeline for Mauritius to become a truly AI-driven economy, Mr. Mohabeer noted that the question is inherently complex due to the field’s constant evolution. He pointed out that while we may achieve our initial targets within a set period, the rapid pace of innovation means the journey of adaptation is continuous. He emphasized that the more crucial objective is to grasp the true essence of AI.

“AI is not merely a tool, but an entire field of study. Today, we have a wealth of open-source AI tools at our disposal that can be leveraged to significantly boost national productivity,” he affirms.

To navigate this journey effectively, Mr. Mohabeer advises that Mauritius must first identify the specific pain points within its key economic sectors. Only then can the nation target them with precise and powerful AI solutions.

Finally, we asked the protagonist of this story—AI, more precisely ChatGPT—what it thinks of Mauritius’s determination to embrace artificial intelligence and which avenues hold the most promise.

ChatGPT’s response: “In Mauritius, opportunities are not distant possibilities; they are already within reach. In tourism, AI can power personalised itineraries, predictive bookings and real-time translation, positioning Mauritius as a smart destination. In financial services, AI can boost fraud detection, credit scoring and personalised advice, helping the sector move up the global value chain.

Agriculture and fisheries can gain from smart farming, drone imaging, predictive weather tools and AI-driven supply chains, reducing imports and protecting resources. In healthcare, AI-driven diagnostics, telemedicine and predictive analytics can improve access to affordable, high-quality services and support medical tourism.

Education may be the most crucial. Adaptive learning and intelligent tutoring can personalise teaching, close gaps and prepare future workers, creating a workforce able not just to use AI but to build with it.

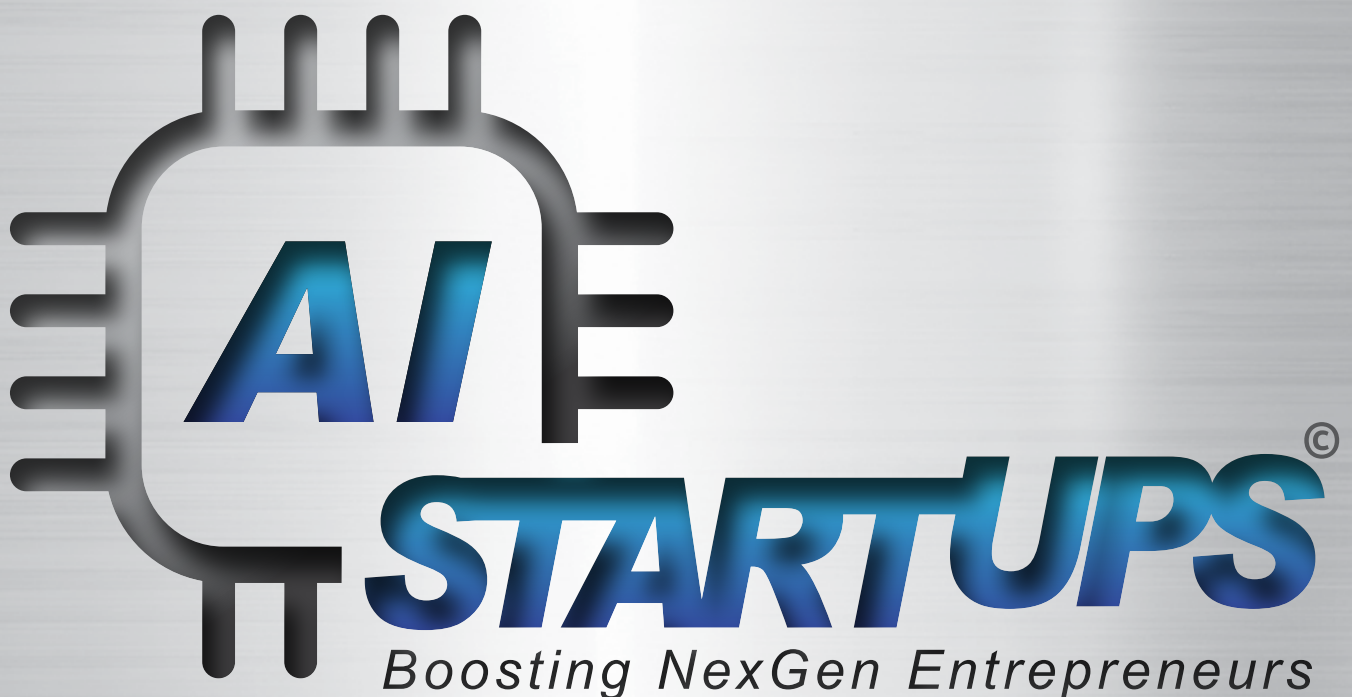
But AI would remind us that technology alone is not the destination. Innovation needs human creativity, good governance and ethical safeguards. Mauritius’s ambition to be a hub for ethical AI requires trust, inclusiveness and transparency.

The message is clear: the seeds of an AI-driven future are planted. The challenge now is execution—business adoption, worker reskilling and public acceptance.

The sugar cane fields shaped our past, but tomorrow’s prosperity will depend on how intelligently we cultivate data. If Mauritius gets this right, it can redefine its place in the global economy—not as a small island nation, but as a smart island nation.”



**Launching the  
AI Startups  
Project: Building  
Mauritius's Next  
Generation of  
Entrepreneurs**



The NPCC is proud to announce the launch of the AI Startups Project, a pioneering initiative designed to unlock the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a driver of sustainable economic growth and job creation in Mauritius. This government-funded programme is more than a training exercise—it is a bold step toward shaping the island into a hub of innovation, entrepreneurship and digital excellence.

At its core, the AI Startups Project addresses two pressing national needs: creating meaningful employment for young graduates in the ICT sector and positioning Mauritius at the forefront of the global digital economy. By equipping young innovators with the right mix of technical expertise, entrepreneurial mindset and financial support, the project aims to generate a steady pipeline of AI-driven ventures that directly contribute to the country's productivity and competitiveness. The target is ambitious yet realistic: the creation of five new AI startups every year and over twenty new jobs annually, ensuring measurable impact on the economy.

The programme's structure is designed to guide participants step by step from idea to fully operational startup. It begins with design thinking training to stimulate creativity and problem-solving, followed by an intensive AI Sprint where teams transform their ideas into prototypes. Participants will then undergo AI and entrepreneurship training, gaining essential skills in business planning, marketing, finance and operations. The journey culminates in a business plan pitching exercise, where the most promising ventures will compete for seed funding and incubation support.

A unique feature of the AI Startups Project is its strong ecosystem of support. A Technical Committee comprising academics, AI experts, industry leaders, and incubators will accompany participants throughout their journey—offering mentorship, guidance, and critical industry connections. The best five business plans will each receive seed grants of Rs 100,000, along with incubation from the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC).

Beyond funding, participants will join a growing alumni network and benefit from extended mentorship to ensure their startups thrive well beyond the project's duration.

The project also takes a forward-looking approach to sustainability. A "1% give-back" mechanism encourages successful startups to reinvest in the ecosystem, ensuring continuity and support for future generations of entrepreneurs. With its thematic focus on priority areas such as environmental resilience, healthcare and education, smart business and cities, and tourism and ocean innovation, the AI Startups Project is perfectly aligned with Mauritius's national development agenda.

By blending innovation with entrepreneurship, this initiative empowers young Mauritians to transform ideas into scalable solutions that not only address local challenges but also compete on the international stage. The NPCC firmly believes that tomorrow's prosperity will be built not only on our natural resources but also on our ability to harness data, creativity, and AI to forge new opportunities.

The AI Startups Project marks a turning point. It is the beginning of a new chapter for Mauritius—one where youth-led innovation drives growth, AI accelerates productivity, and entrepreneurship secures the island's place as a smart and competitive nation.





## PORTRAIT

### **Nadine Pierre**

### **A Journey of Dedication to ELIT**

For more than a decade, Mrs. Nadine Pierre has been closely associated with the NPCC through *Entreprendre au Féminin Océan Indien (EFOI) – Région Maurice*. Her story is one of perseverance, quiet strength and a deep attachment to the English Literacy using IT (ELIT) project, which has transformed hundreds of lives across Mauritius.

Down memory lane, Mrs. Pierre recalls her beginnings with humility. **“I was the only trainer in my batch of learners who persevered to give English Literacy using Information Technology courses,”** she says. Despite her natural shyness, she overcame her fears and pushed forward, inspired by the encouragement and coaching of her trainers, late Mr. Cyril Colleemallay and Mrs. Vimi Goorah, Lead Innovation, Advocacy and Entrepreneurship at the NPCC.

Her commitment to ELIT grew even stronger when the pandemic struck and the programme had to make a sudden transition from the familiar comfort of face-to-face teaching to the uncertainty of the online space. For many trainers, this shift felt overwhelming, but Mrs. Pierre saw it as an opportunity to grow rather than a setback. Instead of retreating from the challenge, she embraced it wholeheartedly. Working side by side with Mrs. Goorah, she ventured into new territory, learning to adapt the ELIT modules for delivery on Google Classroom.

It was not just about mastering a new platform—it was about ensuring that no learner was left behind during a time of crisis. Mrs. Pierre spent long hours rethinking how lessons could be interactive, accessible and supportive even in a virtual setting. **“It was a great privilege for me going to this next level,”** she reflects with pride, acknowledging not only the new digital skills she acquired but also the personal growth she experienced in stepping out of her comfort zone.




For her, this was more than a technical achievement; it was proof that resilience, guided by purpose, can turn challenges into milestones.

Through her dedication, Mrs. Pierre has also witnessed the ripple effects of ELIT extend far beyond the classroom. The programme has not only improved literacy and IT skills but has ignited a spirit of empowerment among women and their families. Within EFOI itself, several of her trainees have risen to positions of leadership, joining the association’s executive committee, taking on responsibilities such as the treasury, and in some cases even becoming ELIT trainers themselves. She describes this as one of the most rewarding parts of her journey—watching women who once hesitated to speak up now lead with confidence, or learners who once struggled with basic skills now guiding others on their own educational paths. These transformations, she says, are living proof of ELIT’s impact: it is not just a course, but a catalyst for change that strengthens communities and inspires a cycle of giving back.

Over the years, Mrs. Pierre has helped guide more than 400 trainees through ELIT, both face-to-face and online. She has seen women improve their English and digital literacy and become more productive in their daily lives—at home, in the workplace and in society. Beyond literacy, they have embraced values of self-esteem, neighbourliness, entrepreneurship and self-help, applying tools such as MUDA and 5S alongside computer technology.

Looking back, Mrs. Pierre sees her collaboration with NPCC not only as a professional engagement, but as a mission close to her heart. ELIT, for her, is more than a training programme—it is a movement that uplifts lives. **“Thanks to the NPCC, the Mauritian community is being pushed towards a positive and more productive future,”** she affirms.

Her journey reflects the true spirit of the NPCC’s mission: empowering individuals, building capacity and shaping a brighter future through skills and knowledge.



**Global Innovation  
Index 2025:  
Mauritius ranks  
53<sup>rd</sup> globally and  
1<sup>st</sup> in Sub Saharan  
Africa**

Mauritius has affirmed its position as a top-tier innovation hub in Sub-Saharan Africa and a competitive player on the global stage, according to the highly anticipated Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025, published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

According to the recently released Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025, published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Mauritius has ascended to an impressive 53<sup>rd</sup> place globally, solidifying its position as the undisputed innovation leader in Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the report, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to make measured progress, with 10 economies improving in the ranking and several solidifying their position. Mauritius (53<sup>rd</sup>) remains the region's top performer. Our country leads in VC investors (5<sup>th</sup>), while maintaining top regional ranks in Institutions (32<sup>nd</sup>), Market sophistication (28<sup>th</sup>) and Creative outputs (37<sup>th</sup>). South Africa (61<sup>st</sup>), Seychelles (75<sup>th</sup>), Botswana (87<sup>th</sup>) and Senegal (89<sup>th</sup>) follow in the regional ranking – with all improving their ranking, except for Botswana. Seychelles returns to the GII in 2025, re-entering the rankings for the first time since 2015 and landing within the top 80.

The 2025 edition of the Global Innovation Index reveals a world in transition, where innovation remains a critical driver of competitiveness and resilience – but one that is evolving rapidly in character and geography. While the group of top innovation leaders remain largely stable, the global innovation landscape is becoming more diverse, with several middle-income economies making steady progress and regional dynamics shifting.





# ELIT Online: Empowering Women Through Digital and Language Literacy

The NPCC, in collaboration with Mauritius Network Services (MNS) Ltd, held a certificate award ceremony on 15 July 2025 for 85 women who successfully completed the ELIT Online programme. The event marked a major step forward in advancing digital and English literacy among women across Mauritius.

“

*ELIT Online is about self-empowerment, building confidence, and opening doors to a world of opportunities.*

Originally launched in 2005 as a UNESCO-backed initiative, the ELIT programme has grown into a transformative platform for women with low academic backgrounds. The 2023 edition, supported by MNS Ltd, reached 132 women from six NGOs, building on a successful online pilot in 2022.

In his keynote address, NPCC Executive Director Dr. Vinaye Ancharaz highlighted the programme’s deeper impact:

**“This initiative is more than just learning English or mastering IT skills. It is about self-empowerment, building confidence, and opening doors to a world of opportunities. Today, we celebrate not just certificates, but the extraordinary journey of women who balanced entrepreneurship, family, and community roles to master English and IT skills. Their success proves that with determination and the right tools, barriers can be broken.”**

The participants were trained by NGO representatives who had previously undergone a comprehensive “Training of Trainers” course delivered by NPCC and Entrepreneurs au Féminin Océan Indien Region Maurice (EFOI) experts. EFOI then partnered with five other NGOs—Affordable Housing Association; Educational Development and Youth Consultancy Services Epilepsy Group; Groupement Social de Souillac; M-Kids Association; Wings Of Future; and Entrepreneurs Cooperative Society Ltd—to deliver the programme across Mauritius. Digital tools enabled flexible learning, peer engagement, and progress tracking from home.

The event also featured a showcase of products by ELIT participants, demonstrating how the acquired skills are being translated into entrepreneurship and innovation. The NPCC and MNS Ltd reaffirmed their commitment to further supporting digital inclusion and women’s empowerment through collaborative initiatives.





**National  
Leadership  
Engine**

# **NLE 2025: Youth Leaders Shine at National Convention**



The sixth edition of the National Leadership Engine (NLE) culminated on 23 August 2025 with a National Convention held at the Institut Français de Maurice (IFM), Rose-Hill. The event brought together young participants, alumni, members of the Leadership Engine Action Drivers (LEAD) and key stakeholders to celebrate the spirit of leadership and innovation.

The sixth edition of the National Leadership Engine (NLE) culminated on 23 August 2025 with a National Convention held at the Institut Français de Maurice (IFM), Rose-Hill. The event brought together young participants, alumni, members of the Leadership Engine Action Drivers (LEAD) and key stakeholders to celebrate the spirit of leadership and innovation.

After months of training, project development and rigorous evaluation, the winners of NLE 2024 were announced:

- **Grand Winner: Feyaz Ecologik (Upper Plains Wilhems)**
- **Second Place: Bandes des Roles (Flacq)**
- **Third Place: Heavy Roots (Moka)**

This edition of NLE engaged over 350 youth participants across ten regions of Mauritius, starting with a new self-paced online training module. The most promising participants advanced to a three-day bootcamp in April 2024, where they formed teams to design and implement community-based projects.

In total, 30 impactful projects were carried out island-wide, tackling issues from environmental sustainability to social inclusion. These were evaluated by regional panels, with the best projects from each region advancing to the National Assessment.

In his address, Dr. Vinaye Ancharaz, Executive Director of the NPCC, reminded participants that Mauritius needs leaders at every level:

**“Every great change in history started with young people who dared to dream. Innovators, change-makers, and dreamers—this is the spirit of NLE.”**

The ten best regional projects were as follows:

Region	Project
Black River	Ecozenn
Flacq	Bandes des Roles
Grand Port	Revey Ekologik
Lower Plains Wilhems	Defann Twa - Protez toi avan trop tard
Moka	Heavy Roots
Pamplemousses	JobGo, Konekyon Moris
Port Louis	Flood Monitoring & Alert System
Riviere du Rempart	Plastic Upcycle and Recycle
Savanne Savanne	Mo Apran
Upper Plains Wilhems	Feyaz Ecologik

## NLE 2025: Youth Leaders Shine at National Convention



>> NPCC Chairman, Mr. Arshad Duymun, highlighted the transformative power of youth, while Hon. Aadir Ameer Meea, Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives, emphasised that investing in young leaders means investing in the very soul of Mauritius.

Organised by the NPCC in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the NLE continues to nurture a pipeline of future leaders equipped with personal, social, and entrepreneurial skills. These young people are already proving their ability to drive higher productivity, creativity, and better living for Mauritius. The future is bright—and it is being shaped by the youth of NLE.

### What's next for the Winners?

Feyaz Ecologik



The Feyaz Ecologik project addressed critical issues of environmental pollution through innovative waste management solutions. It involves the transformation of yard waste into eco-friendly paper products and providing training for local residents on waste management.

Dhaneshwaneer Roopchand: "Participating in the NLE project has allowed me not only to discover my leadership skills but to create a network of people with the same wavelengths. We are still brainstorming on new ideas to bring the project to a new heights. Giving a new life to dead leaves, transforming what was once considered waste into a symbol of growth and sustainability. This process has taught me that with innovation and collaboration, there is potential for renewal everywhere we look."

Bande des Roles



Bandes des Roles is a pioneering initiative aimed at repurposing discarded banners into educational board games. The project's goals are threefold: to reduce waste by transforming banners into functional games, to revive classic games like Snakes and Ladders, Tic-Tac-Toe and Hopscotch to encourage physical activity and social interaction and to educate communities about recycling and sustainability through interactive workshops.



Roodrani Rajputtee: “NLE has been a marvelous experience for me. Our team, Bande des Roles, is really very excited to have won even the second prize, which is a remarkable achievement for us. Regarding our plans beyond NLE, we are thinking of giving a real boost to the project and expand it in a way that we can reach more people and at the same time, give life to waste objects. It might not be an easy task, but we think we do have the potential to scale up this project.”

Heavy Roots



Heavy Roots is an innovative, scalable and customisable aeroponic grow-tower system that maximises limited space by stacking crops vertically, reducing the reliance on soil and traditional farming methods. This system, driven by advanced agricultural practices, offers a way to grow food sustainably, even in non-traditional environments by leveraging on latest technology. Heavy roots, is one of its kind model in Mauritius, leveraging on Technology to track nutrient deficiency, water sensors and an automatic water irrigation system.

Dharmesh Gooly: “Definitely, we want to give our project a new and wider dimension as we believe it has seriously big potential for marketability. We have been in touch with a local enterprise, with which we are still talks. But we can say for sure our project has made a good impact. This is what motivates us to keep going.”



# NPCC Partners with Japan Productivity Center to Boost Competitiveness of Malagasy Enterprises

The NPCC has taken a significant step toward fostering regional productivity growth by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Japan Productivity Center (JPC) in April this year in the context of the Centre of Excellence (COE) support to Third Country project. This landmark agreement underscores NPCC's commitment to sharing expertise and promoting the Kaizen philosophy across Africa—beginning with enterprises in Madagascar's agro-processing and tourism sectors.



Under the African Kaizen Initiative, this partnership will empower Malagasy businesses through structured capacity-building programs. The project, proposed by NPCC in January 2025, aims to enhance operational efficiency and competitiveness by introducing lean management tools rooted in the Kaizen methodology—a Japanese approach emphasizing continuous improvement.

#### Key Interventions for Malagasy Enterprises

The NPCC-JPC collaboration will deliver targeted support through:

1. **Awareness & Engagement:** A public webinar to introduce Kaizen principles to Malagasy stakeholders, followed by a call for enterprises to join the initiative.
2. **Capacity Development:** Tailored training sessions on lean management techniques to equip businesses with practical skills for waste reduction and productivity enhancement.
3. **Hands-On Implementation:** Virtual coaching over two months to guide selected enterprises in applying Kaizen tools, coupled with diagnostic assessments to measure readiness.

#### Why This Matters

Madagascar's agro-processing and tourism sectors are vital to its economic resilience. By transferring NPCC's expertise in productivity methodologies, this initiative will:

- Strengthen the competitiveness of Malagasy enterprises in regional and global markets.
- Foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.
- Deepen ties between Mauritius and Madagascar through shared learning.

#### Looking Ahead

This cooperation will be reinforced during the Technical Cooperation Project with JICA, scheduled to start in February 2026, where the NPCC will need to disseminate Kaizen to neighbouring countries including Madagascar.

NPCC's role as a regional productivity advocate continues to expand. This project not only aligns with Mauritius's vision for South-South cooperation but also positions NPCC as a key enabler of Africa's industrial transformation.

# From Strategy to Impact: How NPCC is Driving a National Productivity Movement

In a context marked by slowing productivity growth and mounting competitiveness challenges, the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) is repositioning itself at the heart of Mauritius' economic transformation. With the unveiling of its Strategic Plan 2025–2029 and its recent designation as a Centre of Excellence for Kaizen in Africa, the NPCC is signalling a decisive shift—from fragmented interventions to a systemic, national productivity movement. In this interview, the Executive Director of the NPCC, Dr. Vinay Ancharaz, shares the vision behind the new roadmap, explains its key strategic pillars and outlines how innovation, skills development, digital transformation and mindset change are being woven together to drive sustainable, productivity-led growth for Mauritius and beyond.





**The NPCC has recently unveiled its new Strategic Plan. What was the key motivation behind this new roadmap, and how does it respond to today's productivity and competitiveness challenges?**

When I took up my position as Executive Director of the NPCC in June 2025, I had two key priorities: to revive the institution, which had fallen into a slumber in recent years, and to make it more visible – nationally and internationally. These priorities are among the major goals of the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan 2025-2029 is motivated by the Government Programme 2025-2029 and the Budget Speech 2025-2026, which underscore the role of productivity, innovation and digitalization as the pillars of a new economic model. The Budget Speech, in particular, notes the decline in capital productivity and calls for measures to reverse the trend. The Strategic Plan proposes a systemic approach to boosting all forms of productivity through the design and implementation of National Productivity Policy (NPP). The NPP will mark a fundamental shift in the way the NPCC has been implementing productivity improvement initiatives so far. Business process re-engineering and training carried out at the organizational level on a small scale fails to make an impact on aggregate productivity indicators. The NPP will adopt a top-down approach, with greater potential to impact productivity at the economy-wide level.

**Can you walk us through the key pillars of the new Strategic Plan and explain how each contributes to national productivity?**

The NPCC's new Strategic Plan is a comprehensive and actionable blueprint designed to systematically address the fundamental drivers of productivity. The Plan's strength lies in its five interlinked strategic objectives, which collectively target the policy, human, organizational, cultural, and communicative foundations of a productive economy.

The first pillar – Research and Policy Dialogue – tackles the current siloed approach to productivity enhancement by proposing a National Productivity Policy (NPP). The Policy will provide the much-needed strategic coherence, aligning efforts across government, industry, and academia. The establishment of a national Think Tank and flagship publications like the Mauritius Productivity and Competitiveness Outlook will ensure that decision-making is evidence-based, informed by robust diagnostics and international benchmarking. This creates a "brain" for the productivity movement, ensuring resources are directed effectively and policies are forward-looking and practical. >>

# NPCC's Vision & Strategic Direction



>> The Plan's second strategic pillar - Training with a Focus on Impact and Alignment with National Priorities – transforms skills development from a generic offering to a strategic, needs-driven imperative. Through sector-wide training needs assessments and partnerships with institutions like the University of Mauritius and the HRDC, training will be precisely aligned with the evolving demands of key sectors like manufacturing and services. The establishment of a Certification and Registration System for Productivity Practitioners will professionalize Kaizen, creating a sustained internal capacity for improvement within organizations. This ensures that the workforce is not just skilled, but agile, innovation-ready, and equipped to drive efficiency.

The third pillar – Business Development Paving the Way toward Organizational Excellence and Regional Presence – offers a structured pathway for organizations to achieve excellence. The rebranded Enterprise Productivity Solutions (EPS) programme provides end-to-end support—diagnosis, roadmap, and implementation hand-holding—making productivity gains accessible. Critically, initiatives like Digital Kaizen (IoT) and the enhanced Enterprise Go Digital programme with Robotic Process Automation (RPA) directly address the digital transformation gap, enabling SMEs to modernize operations, reduce costs, and compete globally. Furthermore, positioning Mauritius as a Centre of Excellence for Kaizen in Africa through the Africa Kaizen Initiative elevates our national reputation and fosters knowledge sharing.

Long-term productivity growth requires a societal shift in attitudes. The fourth objective – Advocacy to Increase Productivity Consciousness – seeds this cultural change from the ground up. By targeting youth through the InnovEd and ProSparks projects, the NPCC is instilling innovation, problem-solving, and leadership skills early on, directly linking them to community transformation. The ProHabits initiative aims to internalize productive behaviors in adolescents. The AI for Innovation project tackles both unemployment and the digital skills gap, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit.

This multi-generational approach ensures that the drive for productivity becomes embedded in the national psyche, creating a citizenry that values and contributes to continuous improvement.

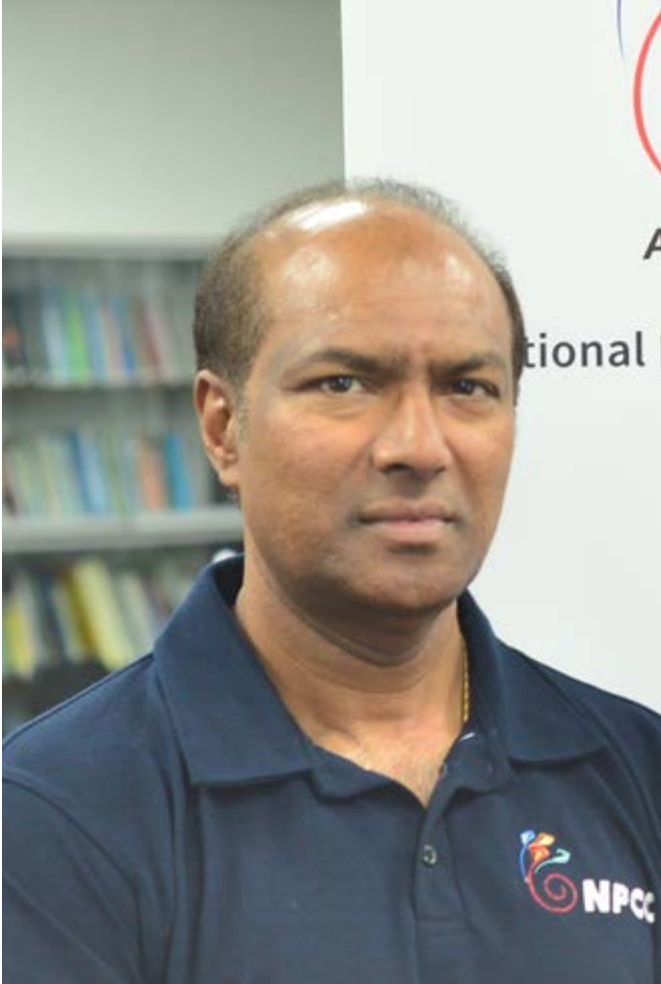
Finally, the best-designed programmes may fail without engagement and buy-in. The fifth pillar ensures the Plan's visibility and reach. A comprehensive marketing strategy using digital media, national campaigns, and targeted outreach will demystify productivity, making it relevant to businesses, students, households, and policymakers alike. By enhancing the NPCC's brand as a trusted leader, the Plan ensures its initiatives gain traction and inspire widespread participation, turning a government strategy into a national movement.

## How does the Strategic Plan strengthen NPCC's role as a catalyst rather than just an advisory body?

The Strategic Plan presents a compelling case as a catalyst for productivity growth in Mauritius by moving beyond isolated interventions to establish an integrated, ecosystem-wide approach. It understands that productivity is a multi-dimensional challenge and, so, instead of focusing solely on one lever, it orchestrates all the levers of productivity simultaneously. The Plan:

- Informs through evidence-based policy;
- Equips through targeted human capital development;
- Transforms through direct enterprise support and digitalization;
- Inspires by cultivating a productivity mindset from school to community;
- Engages through strategic communication that unites the nation behind a common goal.

By creating a self-reinforcing cycle of research, policy, skills development, business excellence, outreach and advocacy, and effective promotion, the Plan lays the groundwork for sustainable, productivity-led growth in Mauritius.



This creates a pipeline of pragmatic, community-focused leaders. Furthermore, the Certification and Registration System (CRS) for productivity practitioners develops leadership in operational excellence within organizations.

Together, these initiatives ensure that enhancing human capital is not just about technical skill but about building an agile, innovative, and proactive citizenry ready to drive national progress.

### **How does the Strategic Plan integrate innovation, digital transformation and Kaizen principles?**

The Strategic Plan integrates innovation, digital transformation, and Kaizen principles as interconnected pillars for driving organizational and national competitiveness, mainly through practical, enterprise-level programmes.

The plan links innovation and digital transformation explicitly via initiatives like the Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project, which equips youth with digital skills to launch startups, and the InnovEd programme, which fosters creative problem-solving in schools. Digitization is positioned as an enabler of innovation.

Digital transformation and Kaizen are merged operationally through the Digital Kaizen – Internet of Things (IoT) pilot project. This initiative injects smart technology into the classic Kaizen framework of continuous improvement, allowing SMEs to use real-time data for efficiency gains. Similarly, the EGD programme incorporates RPA to automate repetitive tasks – a direct application of Kaizen’s waste-elimination principle through digital tools.

Finally, the plan institutionalizes Kaizen as the foundational methodology for sustained improvement. The NPCC strengthens its role as a Centre of Excellence for Kaizen, promotes it via the Enterprise Productivity Solutions (EPS) programme, and embeds it in the public sector through Business Process Re-engineering (BPR). The forthcoming Business Excellence Framework will further standardize these principles. >>

### **Productivity is often said to be about people first. How does the new Strategic Plan address skills, mindset and leadership development?**

The Strategic Plan places people at the heart of the productivity movement by systematically addressing skills, mindset, and leadership development.

For skills, it adopts a needs-driven approach, conducting sector-wide assessments to align training with market demand. It expands the Productivity and Competitiveness Learning Centre with modern methods, partners with academic institutions for certified Professional Development Programmes, and implements targeted capacity-building for SMEs to boost export competitiveness.

To cultivate a productivity mindset among the citizenry, the plan embeds advocacy deep within society. The ProHabits initiative instils productive behaviors in youth, while the revamped InnovEd programme and AI project foster innovation and entrepreneurial thinking. Community-based programmes like ProSparks connect mindset to practical local problem-solving.

The ProSparks model is also central to leadership development, transitioning youth from theory to applied leadership by having them co-design solutions with city councils.

# NPCC's Vision & Strategic Direction



>> The NPCC has been designated as a Centre of Excellence. What does this recognition mean in practical terms for the organization and for Mauritius?

The NPCC's recent designation as a Centre of Excellence for Kaizen by the Africa Kaizen Initiative is a transformative milestone that validates its domestic expertise and propels its regional ambitions. This recognition is the direct result of the NPCC's years of systematic capacity-building and cumulative experience. The organization has not only conducted extensive Kaizen training across Mauritius' private and public sectors but has also institutionalized these methodologies through initiatives like the proposed CRS and the EGD and EPS programmes.

Nationally, this recognition boosts the NPCC's visibility and credibility, positioning it as the undisputed national champion of operational excellence. I hope that this will help catalyze increased demand for the NPCC's services from local organizations, directly supporting the Strategic Plan's core objective of delivering sustainable organizational competitiveness. The designation also reinforces the NPCC's authority to lead initiatives like Smart Processes in the public sector and a national Business Excellence Framework tailored to SMEs, thus accelerating Mauritius' journey toward a high-productivity economy.

Regionally and internationally, the accolade transforms the NPCC from a national body into a continental hub for knowledge and best practice. The Strategic Plan already outlines ambitions to host the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference in 2026 and deliver regional training. The Centre of Excellence status provides the formal platform and enhanced reputation to leverage its proven experience – showcased in countries like Benin, Botswana and Madagascar – to a much wider African audience. It enables Mauritius to export its productivity model, generating soft power, potential revenue, and valuable cross-learning.

Ultimately, being recognized as a Centre of Excellence fortifies both the NPCC's mandate at home and its role as a locomotive of productivity-led growth across Africa.



# PRODUCTIVITY ON THE MOVE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL

**NPCC**

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THE NPCC IS A CERTIFIED CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN KAIZEN