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**IFAD**  
Investing in rural people



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## DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE INTRODUCTORY SERIES

# Workshop 4: Artificial Intelligence Infrastructure

20 May 2026 | Virtual



# Introduction

The digital economy is the fastest growing sector globally, creating new investment pressures for fiscally constrained countries.

## Governments face a strategic choice:

- Shape infrastructure through public policy and financing, or
- Allow private sector-led expansion

## Initial focus:

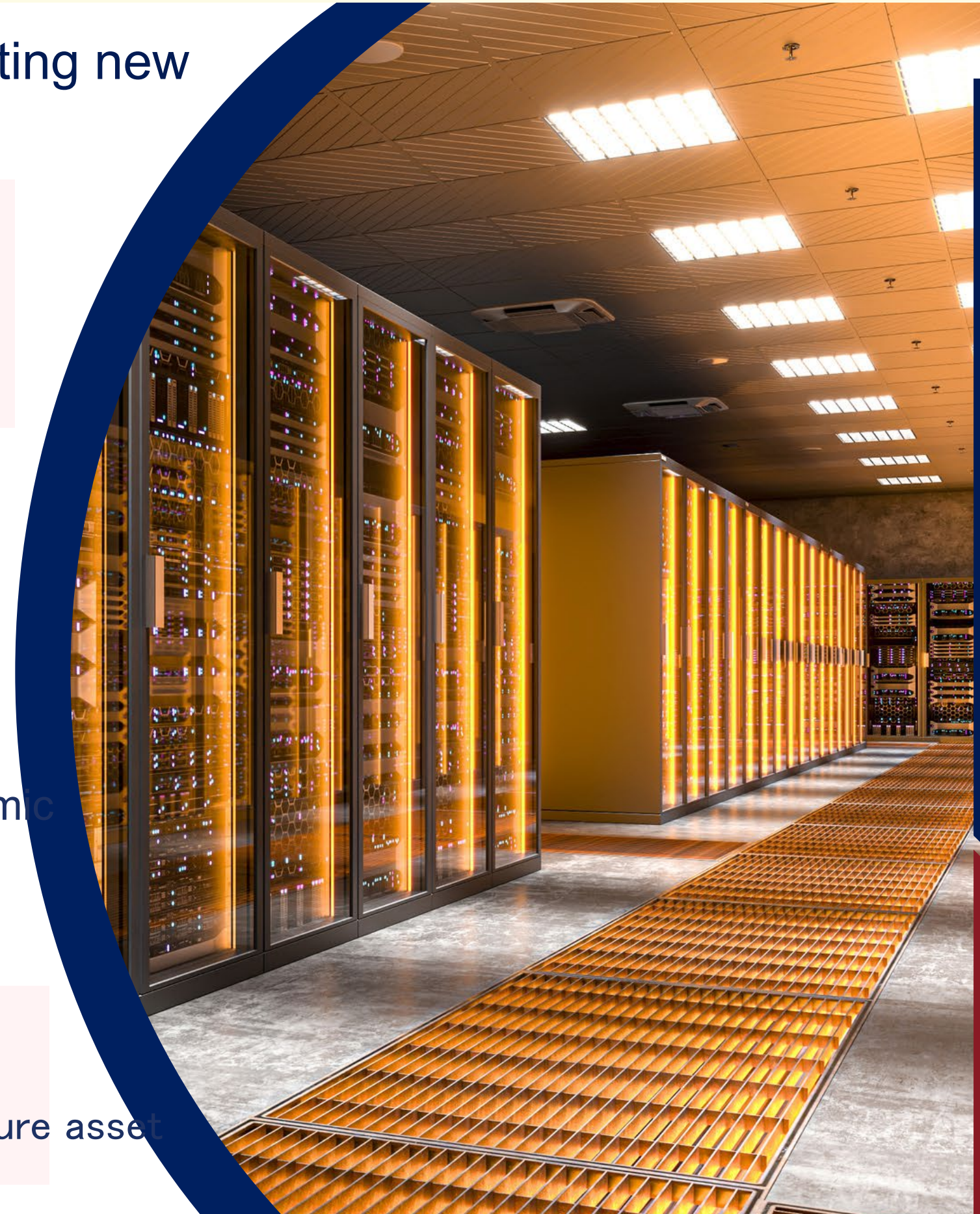
- Universal connectivity (closing internet access gaps)

## Turning point (2023-2024): AI transformation

- AI tools (ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepSeek) became productive economic agents
- AI now drives demand for infrastructure, not just usage

## Shift:

- From basic access infrastructure → strategic, competitive infrastructure asset



# Global Race, Gaps & Strategic Choices

## Global AI Investment Surge

- US: \$500bn; EU: ~\$300bn; China prioritizing AI nationally
- Emerging Hubs: Asia, Middle East, Israel, Latin America
- Africa: primarily a future AI user, with growth potential

## Implications for IFIs & Governments

- Shift from “additionality” → “strategic/ industrial policy” investment
- MDBs allocate <5% of portfolios to digital infrastructure



# Key Questions

## What should be built?

- How will AI reshape infrastructure needs in terms of scale and type, and how should governments respond?
- Will this influence how countries prioritize public investment and deliver services?

## What regulatory framework is required?

- How can regulations be future-proofed, practical, enforceable, and not overly complex?
- Do we need to rethink data privacy, cybersecurity, and global regulatory standards in the age of AI?

## Who is responsible for financing?

- Should digital infrastructure remain primarily driven by the private sector, or should governments and IFIs take a more active role?
- Is there real public finance space and commitment for this sector to grow?



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20 May 2026 | 22:00 - 00:00 (GMT+8) | Virtual



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