



AfriLabs Annual Gathering Report **2023**



AFRILABS
ANNUAL
GATHERING

Kigali
2023



**ACCELERATING AFRICA'S
DIGITAL ECONOMY;**
BY THE STRENGTH
OF OUR COMMUNITY

11th – 13th October, 2023

*At
Kigali Convention Center
Kigali, Rwanda*

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Introduction

AfriLabs is revolutionizing the African innovation and technology ecosystem with their 8th Annual Gathering, which took place in Kigali, Rwanda from Wednesday the 11th of October to Friday the 13th of October 2023. This year's gathering and theme "Accelerating Africa's digital economy; by the strength of our community" provided attendees with access to investor networks and key stakeholder groups which include high-level startups, academics, media partners, developmental organizations and titans of industry.

The event featured key industry leaders/organizations as track champions who are ready to reshape the future of African innovation. These champions facilitated activities such as panel discussions, master classes, workshops, focus group discussions, training, showcase of best practices and co-creation sessions throughout the event.



The event was a great chance for stakeholders across different sectors to come together under one roof not only to exchange knowledge but also to witness first-hand how collective action can help shape this continent's future into a fully digitized Africa by 2030.



Engagement with the Rwandan Government

Earlier this year, Rwanda's Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Hon. Paula Ingabire gave her endorsement for the 2023 AfriLabs Annual Gathering (AAG) to be held in Kigali, Rwanda.

Rwanda's Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Hon Paula Inagbire, stated that "Rwanda is always open to welcome regional and global innovators. Our goal is to empower scalable startups that collectively transform our communities with cutting-edge innovations." The sentiment perfectly reflects the purpose of AfriLabs Annual Gathering 2023: bringing together individuals from all facets of the technology and innovation ecosystem in Africa to meet, learn, and share.

To further show commitment in supporting and encouraging the efforts of AfriLabs for the AfriLabs Annual Gathering, the Rwandan government were fully represented by the Yves Iradukunda, Permanent Secretary and Esther Kunda, Director General of Innovation & Emerging Technology of the Ministry of ICT. Additionally, the government provided in-kind support and financial aid to make the AfriLabs Annual Gathering a success, and the AfriLabs community is grateful for its support.



Opening Ceremony

The day started with a lively opening ceremony featuring a performance by the renowned Inyamibwa Cultural Troupe. Powerful speeches were delivered on the main stage by Yves Iradukunda, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of ICT, Rwanda, Hon. Benjamin Kalu, Deputy Speaker House of Representatives, Nigeria, Anna Ekeledo, AfriLabs Executive Director, Moetaz Helmy, AfriLabs Board Chair, Jennifer Okeke-Ojiudu, AfriLabs Senior Ecosystem Engagements Manager.



Keynote Speech & Fireside Chat

Mr. Yves gave a powerful keynote speech and later sat with with the AfriLabs Executive Director, Anna Ekeledo for a fireside chat to discuss the efforts of the government in building the digital economy in the East Africa country and taking bold steps to leverage the tech ecosystem to improve the lives of every citizen. He also encouraged other African countries to prioritize creating an enabling environment for startups to thrive.



Quotes.

1. It's our collective responsibility to nurture and support the next generation of African innovators and entrepreneurs and to drive lasting positive change in Africa — Moetaz Hemly, AfriLabs Board Chair.

2. Africa holds immense power. Africa is the birthplace of humanity. Africa holds in her bosom our dreams and ambitions that's why Africa is called Mother Africa because she is the one we will sacrifice for- Anita Erskine

3. Our youthful and dynamic population is eager to seize the power of technology and innovation to overcome challenges and create opportunities in Africa — Anna Ekeledo, AfriLabs Executive Director.

4. Where we are today gives us hope that indeed digital economy and Innovation can empower all other economic sectors- Mr. Yves Iradukunda, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of ICT, Rwanda

5. Rwanda's blended finance model looks beyond just investing in the startups but it's also creating a pathway where they can demonstrate the possibility of potential investment in Africa.- Mr. Yves Iradukunda, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of ICT, Rwanda

6. With the right tools and policies of government, our potential for innovation and exponential growth within our digital economy is unmatched-Hon. Benjamin Kalu, Deputy Speaker House of Representatives, Nigeria



Summary of Event Tracks

The event consisted of six content tracks, each with a specific focus;





The Investor track

The Investor track of the AfriLabs Annual Gathering in Kigali, Rwanda, explored the funding gaps in the African technology and innovation ecosystem and innovative solutions required to bridge these gaps. The track featured a number of panel sessions on topics such as Investing in Disruption: The Power of Industrial Digitalization, Unlocking Global Markets: The Role of Capital in Innovation, Fueling Success: The Power of Acceleration Programs and Mentorship in Startup Ecosystems, and other fireside conversations. The speakers under this track includes:

Welcome Address

- *Ajibola Odukoya, COO, AfriLabs, Nigeria*
- *Leah Hinstrosa, Startup Coordinator, Identic Foundation, Equatorial Guinea*
- *Yousif Yahya, Founder, Savannah Innovation Labs, Sudan*



Keynote Address

Investing in Disruption: The Power of Industrial Digitalization

- *Nelly Mukazayire – Deputy CEO Rwanda Development Board Presentation*

Rwanda Landscape, Exploring Investment Opportunities

- *Leila Rwagasana, FinTech Consultant, Kigali International Finance Center*

Panel Session 1

Unlocking Global Markets: The Role of Capital in Innovation

- *Kudzai Mubaiwa, Co-Founder and Strategy Lead, iZone Hub, Zimbabwe*
- *Jeremy Riro, Founder and Innovation Lead, Fie_Labs Innovation Hub, Kenya (Moderator)*
- *Anne Lawi, Managing Director for Africa, Impacc, Kenya*

Presentation 2

The Innovation Ecosystem of Rwanda

- *Esther Kunda, Director General, Innovation & Emerging Technologies, Ministry of ICT and Innovation, Government of Rwanda*

Startup Pitch Session

- *Startup Cup Africa by iVenture*

Catalytic Africa Presentation

- *Fadilah Tchoumba, Secretary General, ABAN, Ghana*
- *Mayssa Mrabet, Community Director, AfriLabs*

Workshop by Builder.Ai

- *Jack Drummond-Smillie, Associate Director of Strategic Sales, Enterprise Accounts and Cloud Services.*

Brainz & Lloyds Presentation

Brienze Lawrence, Chief Executive officer (CEO), Braniz & Lloyds Aviation, Dublin.

Panel Session 2:

Fueling Success: The Power of Acceleration Programs and Mentorship in Startup Ecosystems by VC4A

- *Amy Kpentey, Program Associate, Impact Hub, Ghana*
- *Innocent Ndodyabike, Capital Services Manager, Anza, Tanzania*
- *Marwa Youssef, Director of Partnerships, La Startup Station, Morocco*
- *Yousif Yahya, Founder, Savannah Innovation Labs, Sudan (Moderator)*





Quotes.

1. The market dictates what you build and that's the biggest disconnect with most businesses- Anne Lawi, Managing Director for Africa, Impact Kenya
2. Many times, we focus extensively on the business models of SMEs and start-ups but often overlook the role of the founders. However, it is important to note that the behavior of these businesses is often influenced by their owners. Therefore, it is imperative that we emphasize the basics such as financial literacy.- Kudzai Mubaiwa, Co-founder and Strategy Lead iZone Hub, Zimbabwe
3. It is important to build a product that addresses the market you operate in, otherwise, the product will not work- Anne Lawi, Managing Director for Africa, Impact Kenya
4. We have to consider building a broad base economy within the continent because it is instrumental in transforming the African economy- Fadilah Tchoumba, Secretary General, ABAN
5. In business, you fall forward, you don't fail. Every single time you fall, you learn something- Brienze Lawrence, CEO Braniz and Llyods



The Climate Change and Adaptation track

Climate change is a pressing issue that threatens to derail the progress made in Africa over the past decade. The continent is at a tipping point, and temperatures are predicted to rise faster than the global average during the 21st century. To combat this, it is essential to mainstream, scale-up, and accelerate support for climate change adaptation across the continent. At this year's Annual Gathering, this track brought together experts and innovators to explore sustainable approaches to climate action. The welcome note was by Track Hosts Nanko Madu, Programmes Director, AfriLabs, Nigeria and Ayuk Etta, CEO, MountainHub, Cameroon.

The presentation on Accelerating Africa's Green Innovation Ecosystem was done by Mr. Bankole Oloruntoba, Nigeria Climate Innovation Center.

Welcome by Track Host

- *Nanko Madu, Programmes Director, AfriLabs, Nigeria*
- *Etta Ayuk, CEO, Mountain Hub, Cameroon*

Keynote Address

Eric Tambo, Associate Academic Officer at UNU-EHS, Germany

Presentation on Accelerating Africa's Green Innovation Ecosystem

- *Mr. Bankole Oloruntoba, NCIC – (Nigeria)*

Panel Session 1

Technology Innovations for Climate Resilience

- *Martin Karanja, Director, GSMA Innovation Fund, Kenya*
- *Sieka Gatabaki, Program Director, Mercy Corps, Kenya*
- *Etta Ayuk, CEO Mountain Hub, Cameroon (Moderator)*
- *Mr. Bankole Oloruntoba, NCIC – Nigeria*
- *Sonia Umulinga, CEO, Plasticraft Ltd, Rwanda*

Presentation

- *Ifeoma Malo, CEO, Clean Tech Hub, Nigeria*

Panel Session 2:

Climate Science to Action

- *Prof. Kabera Telesphori, Researcher, University of Rwanda*
- *Prof. Damien Hanyurwimfura, Researcher, University of Rwanda*
- *Dr. Emmanuel Ufutiyezu, Head of Master's programs and Teaching ACE-ESD, University of Rwanda*
- *Gabriel Ekman, Co-founder at BAG Innovation, Rwanda (Moderator)*
- *Dr. Ignace Gatare, Principal of College of Science and Technology, University of Rwanda*

Panel Session 3:

Building a Thriving Green Innovation Ecosystem in Africa

- *Felix Mwaki, Director, Enterprise support and investment (KCIC), Kenya*
- *Ifeoma Malo, CEO, Clean Tech Hub, Nigeria*
- *Patrick Nussbaumer, Programme Officer, UNIDO, Austria*
- *Eric Tambo, Associate Academic Officer at UNU-EHS, Germany*
- *Tracy Okoro, Partner DigitA, Nigeria (Moderator)*



Quotes.

1. Africa despite being uniquely vulnerable to the impact of climate change, contributes only 4% of the global carbon emission- Eric Tambo
2. There is already a thriving green ecosystem in Africa. How can we put our hands together to make it work?- Bankole Oloruntoba NCIC
3. The Circular Economy is also a huge market. If Lagos state alone recycles 50% of its plastic we can generate revenues of \$250 million. Think about the potential of the other 36 states in Nigeria -Bankole Oloruntoba NCIC
4. Technology in the climate change sector, will definitely make the systems work better as it does in many other areas- Sieka Gatabaki
5. In building technology, there must be a correlation between the technology solution being built and the market usage; the goal is not just to create fancy technology but usable technology- Martin Karanja
6. It is important that ventures and SME's begin to pay attention to developing metrics that show the impact of climate adaptation activities, as this will impact access to climate funding- Patrick Nussbaumer
7. CleanTech Hub is in favor of the carbon market. As Africans, we need to be educated about the carbon market. It is an emerging market and Africa needs to be a player in it- Ifeoma Malo



The Creative and Technology Intersection track

The Creativity & Technology Intersection Track at AfriLabs Annual Gathering 2023 showcased cross-sector collaborations and innovative initiatives that leverage technology for expression and business development and it showcased the potential of technology in revolutionizing the various creative industries in Africa. A series of enlightening panel sessions took place, each shedding light on the potential of technology to revolutionize diverse creative industries on the continent. The sessions included "Harmonizing the Future: the Tech-Powered African Music Revolution," "Gaming Renaissance in Africa: Powering Creativity and Entrepreneurship," and "Indigenous Art in the Digital Age," among others.

The speakers under this track included:

Welcome Address

- *Steve Tchoumba, Executive Director, ActivSpaces Cameroon*
- *Fifehan Osikanlu, Founder, Eden Venture Group*
- *Karl Carter, CEO, Snake Nation, Atlanta*

Keynote

- *M.I Abaga, Artist/ Founder and CEO, Tasck, Nigeria.*

Panel Session 1:

Harmonizing the future: the tech powered African music revolution

- *Jacqueline Malenga, Director, IndustryNite.xyz & Sanaa Afrika, Nigeria*
- *Housseem Aoudi, Founder, Afkar, Tunisia*
- *Sano Alyn, Artist, Rwanda*
- *M.I Abaga, Artist/ Founder and CEO, Tasck, Nigeria.*

Panel Session 2: Gaming Renaissance in Africa: Powering Creativity and Entrepreneurship.

- *Lesley Donna Williams, CEO, Tshimologong Precinct, South Africa*
- *Muhire Louis Antoine, Founder, Native Rekord Ltd and Funky Monkey ArcadeeGamer Rwanda*
- *GISUBIZO Abi Gaele, CEO, Dope Initiatives, Rwanda*
- *Thomas Shiva, Founder & CEO, Digital Realm Entertainment*

Panel Session 3:

Indigenous Art in the Digital Age

- *Karl Carter, CEO, Snake Nation, Atlanta*
- *Raoul RUGAMBA, Founder and CEO, Hobe Agency & Africa In Colors, Rwanda*
- *Laissa Mouen, Founder, Kinaya Ventures, Senegal (Moderator)*
- *Fadia Elgharib – Operations and Community Lead, GIGN, Egypt*
- *Aisha Augie, The Creator General, Centre For Art and Creative Talent*

Unleashing Digital Brilliance: Igniting Cross-Sector Sparks in Emerging Markets Talent Revolution

- *Charles Emembolu, Co-founder and Director, Roar Nigeria Hub (Moderator)*
- *Aniedi Udo-Obong, Program Manager, Google, United States*
- *Ludovica Ochieng, Incubation Manager, iBiz Africa Innovation Centre, Kenya*
- *Adam Leipzig, CEO, MediaU, United States*
- *Stella Murungi – Chief Digital Officer (CDO), Justice Sector*

Art Presentation: GIZ

Fireside chat: Topic:

Generating African wealth by preserving Art history

- *Seju Alero Mike, Co-Founder and CMO, Atsur, United States*
- *Terna Iwar, Co-Founder and CPO, Atsur, Nigeria*
- *Ada Orajiaku, Co-Founder and CEO, Atsur, Nigeria*
- *Cynthia Muthoni, Community and Operations Lead, Baraza Media Lab, Kenya*

Forging Africa's Future through Immersive Narratives: The Fusion of Non-Fungible Tokens, Transmedia Storytelling, and Virtual Reality

- Aisha Yetunde, Community Programs and Partnerships Director, Thescathcompanies, Nigeria
- Bright Ogor, Executive Director, Alpha Blue Foundation, Nigeria
- Seju Alero Mike, Co-Founder and CMO, Atsur, United States





Quotes.

1. Let's stop the African/Nigerian thing of doing things small, It is time to run big projects to unlock the future – Jude Abaga, Founder and CEO TASCK, Nigeria

2. Africa's problem for not making as much money in the music industry is not lack of talent, but lack of collaboration and knowledge – Jacqueline Malenga, Director, IndustryNite.xyz & Sanaa Afrika, Nigeria

3. You're the change. You're the hope. You're the miracle. And you are all the strength you need in times of miracle. It might take a moment, but I hope we all get it. The world's been waiting on us. We're all epic. – Jude Abaga, Founder and CEO TASCK, Nigeria

4. We need to be consumers of our own games. We own the future global markets and we need to speed up developing ourselves. – Lesley Donna Williams, CEO, Tshimologong Precinct, South Africa

5. We can leverage innovation & technology to help us better preserve our culture. The use of digital art in storytelling showcases the hidden potential for the future.

6. We can leverage innovation & technology to help us better preserve our culture. The use of digital art in storytelling showcases the hidden potential for the future. - Aisha Augie, The Creator General, Centre For Art and Creative Talent

7. Innovation will be better appreciated if it aligns and connects us with our cultural values. – Karl Carter, CEO, Snake Nation, Atlanta

8. You generate revenue by providing value through volume or margin while technology expands market access and opportunities for developers and entrepreneurs. – Aniedi Udo-Obong, Program Manager, Google, United States



The Gender Inclusion track

This highlighted the importance of gender diversity and equity within the tech and entrepreneurship sectors. The Afrilabs Annual Gathering 2023 held several panel sessions and a fireside chat that aimed to address the gender gap in the startup ecosystem in Africa. The sessions were: Accelerating Women in Leadership: Overcoming Barriers to Inclusion in Public and Private Sector, Beyond the Digital Frontier: Innovating Pathways to Bridging the Gender gap by REVUP Women, Addressing the Gender Funding Gap in Africa: Myths, Realities, and Solutions, and Designing for All: Inclusive Innovation and Universal Accessibility.

Our esteemed speakers included:

Welcome by Track Host

Moureen Mollel, Programme Coordinator, Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha.

Special Address

Prudence Ngwenya, Director, Women, Gender and Youth African Union, Ethiopia

Fire-side chat on Gender and Inclusion:

Accelerating Women in Leadership: Overcoming Barriers to Inclusion in Public and Private Sector.

- Jennifer Okeke-Ojiudu – Senior Ecosystem Engagements Manager, AfriLabs (Moderator)
- Sonia Agu, CEO, SA Consulting, Nigeria
- Berna Rusagara, Executive Director, Women for Women, Rwanda

Launch of Working Mother's Guide

Jennifer Okeke-Ojiudu – Senior Ecosystem Events Manager, AfriLabs, Nigeria

Lightning Talk

Hanae Bezaad, CEO, Beehane LLC, Portugal

Panel Session 1 Powered By RevUp:

Beyond the Digital Frontier: Innovating Pathways to Bridging the Gender gap.

- *Nanko Madu -Moderator, Nigeria (Moderator)*
- *Shary Lima, Incubation Program Manager, Ingenious City, DR. Congo*
- *Fayo Williams, Founder, Exponential Hub, Nigeria*
- *Fifehan Osikanlu, Founder, Eden Venture Group*

Gender Gap Report Presentation

Nanko Madu, Programme Director, AfriLabs

Panel Session 2:

Addressing the Gender Funding Gap in Africa: Myths, Realities, and Solutions

- *Rene Parker – Director, RLabs, South Africa*
- *Solomon E. Twum, Country Manager, Reach for Change, Ghana*
- *Mumbi Ndung'u, Chief Growth and Operations, Power to Learn Project, Kenya*
- *Luis Marquez, Value for Women Ltd, Gender and Women Project Lead, Mozambique (Moderator)*

Presentation by RevUp Women or Visa Foundation: Video presentation (Hubs to be selected)

Panel Session 3:

Designing for All: Inclusive Innovation and Universal Accessibility.

- *Bernard Chiira, Director, Innovate Now-Africa, Kenya*
- *Carmen Mateia, Community Manager – Acelera Angola*
- *Matthias Mobius, Startup Hub Director and Co-founder, Uganda (Moderator)*
- *Justina Oha, Digital Equity Africa*
- *Berry Numbi, Managing Director, CINOLU, DR. Congo*



Quotes.

1. When coming up with a policy, it's important that women are included in the conversations and understand them, so that definite actions are taken to address the needs of women. – Sonnia Agu, CEO, SA Consulting, Nigeria
2. The importance of having the conversations is that Women have been known across the globe as culture keepers, why not leverage that for economic growth? - Fifehan Osikanlu, Founder, Eden Venture Group, Nigeria
3. Investors are everywhere. The more we start changing the narrative that investors are scarce, the better for us as women – Rene Parker – Director, RLabs, South Africa
4. When coming up with a policy, it's important that women are included in the conversations and understand them, so that definite actions are taken to address the needs of women
5. We need to be more intentional in creating value for women in education – Mumbi Ndung'u, Chief Growth and Operations, Power to Learn Project, Kenya



The Hub Solutions & Sustainability track

This examined how African technology and innovation hubs can offer quality support to startups while remaining profitable. The AfriLabs Annual Gathering 2023 featured several sessions and workshops that focused on hub solutions, sustainability and management, including a panel session on Crowdsourcing Sustainable Business Models Hub in a Box concept, a panel session on how the Innovation Ecosystem can benefit from Open Innovation Approaches followed by the Launch and Introduction of the Open Innovation Toolkit by Make-IT in Africa and Veridian. These panel sessions and workshops provided insights into how hubs can design their business models and overcome challenges to financial sustainability. The welcome Keynote was done by Marieme KANE, Director of Innovation, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Innovation and Modernisation of Administration, Mauritania.

Welcome address

- *Mayssa Mrabet, Community Director, AfriLabs, Tunisia*
- *Fijfi Baidoo, Founder and Chief Architect, CLOUDPORT, Ghana*
- *Paul Mbuja, Founder, Zixtech Hub, Cameroon*

Keynote:

Building a Legacy of Impact: Opportunities and Challenges for African Tech Hubs

Marieme KANE, Director of Innovation, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Innovation and Modernisation of Administration, Mauritania

Panel Session on Hub Sustainability and Management

- *D Yvonne Rivers, CEO and Founder, Phoebe Marketing Group, United States*
- *Fifi Baidoo, Founder and Chief Architect, CLOUDPORT, Ghana*
- *Paul Mbua, Founder, Zixtech Hub, Cameroon*
- *Alexandra Fraser, CEO, Viridian, South Africa*
- *Tunde Mclver – CEO, MusterPoint, Nigeria*
- *Lesley Donna Williams, CEO, Tshimologong Precinct, South Africa*

Hub in a Box:

Crowdsourcing Sustainable Business Models Hub in a Box concept

Ahmed Bastawy, Managing Director, ICEALEX, Egypt

GIZ Make IT Panel:

How can the Innovation Ecosystem benefit from Open Innovation Approaches?

- *Matthias Mobius, Director and Co-founder, StartHub, Uganda*
- *Henri Nyakarundi, ARED Group, United States*
- *Ornella Nkurunziza, Rwanda Innovation Fund*
- *Charles Shyaka – MD 250 Startups*
- *Olaf Seidel, Make-IT in Africa Head of Project SOUTH, Namibia*
- *Alexandra Fraser, CEO, Viridian, South Africa (Moderator)*

Workshop:

Launch and Introduction of the Open Innovation Toolkit by Make-IT in Africa and Veridian.

Alexandra Fraser, CEO, Viridian, South Africa

Fireside chat on : Improving Hubs sustainability in Francophone countries: Development of performance indicators/sustainability criteria.

- *Elodie Apremont, Senior Innovation Consultant, Impact Lab, Dubai*
- *Yannick EBIBIE, Director, SING, Gabon*
- *Moussa Hubert OUOLOGUEM, Director Expert'labs, Mali*
- *Alida Ebo'o, Digital Communication and Event Consultant, Youth Business Cameroon (YBC)/ Founder ZEMAWorld Digital, Cameroon*

Developing Africa through FabLabs/ Makerspaces

- *Tochukwu C. Chukwueke, Founder, Clintonel Innovation Centre (CIC), Nigeria*
- *Martin Oloo, Founder, Fablab Winam, Kenya (Moderator)*
- *Husna Butoyi Umurerwa, Program Manager, Fablab, Rwanda*
- *Abdur Rahim, Founder/MD, WAZIUP, Germany*
- *Tsuneo Heito, Chief Advisor /JICA Digital and Innovation Promotion Project, Rwanda*
- *Oluwaseyi Ogidiolu, Technical Advisor, GIZ DTC, Nigeria*





Quotes.

1. To be sustainable as a hub, you need to have a SWOT analysis in order to understand your threat – D Yvonne Rivers, CEO and Founder, Phoebe Marketing Group, United States
2. Knowing your costs, self-payments and your business model is a tool toward sustainability. – Alexandra Fraser, CEO, Viridian, South Africa
3. Sustainability in Africa's perspective should focus on what we are trying to solve. – Tunde Mclver – CEO, MusterPoint, Nigeria.
4. Getting donor funding is not necessarily a bad thing because even most organizations in Europe receive funding from the government. The key to utilizing the funds is understanding your business model. – Alexandra Fraser, CEO, Viridian, South Africa
5. It's best to have a heart for impact and a heart for commerce. – Lesley Donna Williams, CEO, Tshimologong Precinct, South Africa
6. Sustainability is not about finance but rather, finance is a tool for sustainability. – Ahmed Bastawy, Managing Director, ICEALEX, Egypt
7. You need to have internal capacities to build new innovations. – Matthias Mobius, Director and Co-founder, StartHub Africa, Uganda
8. Corporations and innovators must be on the same page, with innovators understanding the challenges that large corporations face hence forming appropriate partnerships. – Ornella Nkurunziza, Rwanda Innovation Fund
9. Limited access to infrastructures is among the biggest challenges that the Africa tech hub faces. – Marieme KANE, Director of Innovation, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Innovation and Modernisation of Administration, Mauritania



The Policy and Data-Driven Africa track

This explored policy-related challenges and data-driven decision-making and governance strategies for inclusive growth in Africa. It also featured a ministerial roundtable focused on policy harmonization.

Our keynote speaker was Lacina Kone, CEO and Director General of Smart Africa, a pan-African initiative that aims to transform Africa into a single digital market.

Welcome address

- Garikai Nhogo, Senior Communications Manager, Co-Develop, Rwanda
- Anita Erskine, Executive Director, Erskine Global Communications, Canada

Keynote:

Lacina Koné, Director General / CEO Director General / CEO Smart Africa, Rwanda.

Policy conversation/debate

Serge Ntamack

Presentation

Aniedi Udo-Obong, Google, San Francisco

Panel Session 1:

Research and Development for Digital Transformation: Shared Insights from Africa and Diaspora'

- *Dr. Itoro Emembolu, Board Member and Research Lead, AfriLabs, Nigeria (Moderator)*
- *Prof. Sam Yala, President, AIMS, Rwanda*
- *Lisa Hiemer-Maqoma, Team Lead Digital Governance and Innovation, GIZ, Germany*
- *Kevin Marks, Director and Pioneer Sustainable Agriculture, United States*
- *Eniola Mafe Abaga, Global Advocacy and Partnership Director at Bridges to Prosperity.*

Panel Session 2:

AI Perceptions, Opportunities and Prospects for Data Driven Decision-Making in Innovation Hubs.

- *Dr Odiong Akpan, Managing Partner, Ubulu Africa, Nigeria*
- *Khaoula Behi, Managing Director, Future Islands, Germany*
- *Edwell Gumbo, Head of Enterprise Development, Tshimologong Precinct, South Africa*

Fireside chat:

Fostering Future Leaders: Crafting Effective Policies for Youth Empowerment and Engagement.

- *Anita V.M. Erskine (MC), Executive Director, Erskine Global Communications, Canada*
- *Routouang Mohamed Ndonga Christian, Former Minister of Youth, Sports and Entrepreneurship of ChadPCA of SONACIM / Ecosystem Enabler.*

Panel Session 3:

Tech and Policy Transformation: Paving the Way for Data-Driven Innovation and Privacy in Africa.

- *Dr. Itoro Emembolu, AfriLabs Board Member and Research Lead, Nigeria* ● *Madeline Ileleji, Business Developer Manager, Jokkolabs Banjul, Gambia (Moderator)*
- *Obinna Osiogun, Vice President Africa, Plural Policy, Nigeria*
- *Üllar Jaaksoo, Founder and Partner, Digital Nations, Estonia*





Quotes.

1. The government's collaborative effort is crucial for building trust in the tech startup capital. – Lacina Kone, CEO and Director General of Smart Africa
2. Due to the lack of support for skill sets, unfavorable policies, and untapped potential, countries are not benefiting from the knowledge and skills amassed by their youth in regard to educational and work policies. -Eniola Mafe Abaga, Global Advocacy and Partnership Director at Bridges to Prosperity
3. One crucial aspect of any transformation in the digital economy must be the measurement of its true impact. Policymakers and stakeholders should prioritize this. – Kevin Marks, Director and Pioneer of Sustainable Agriculture, United States
4. Stakeholders, the government and local communities need to be engaged to play a huge role in providing awareness and knowledge on how to use data. – Dr. Itoro Emembolu, Board Member and Research Lead, AfriLabs, Nigeria (Moderator)
5. Existing policies should provide both analogue and digital support to all agricultural entrepreneurs, recognizing their varying levels of operation. – Kevin Marks, Director and Pioneer of Sustainable Agriculture, United States



MoU Signing at AAG 23

The AfriLabs Annual Gathering event also unveiled AfriLabs partnership with Builder.ai, Algeria Venture and Renew Capital where a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all three organizations and AfriLabs. Here are some details of the partnership:





Builder.ai

Builder.ai is an AI-powered software designed to help technical and non-technical individuals, organizations and platforms, build and operate software projects. This partnership will give Builder.ai access to the African market, allowing the company to grow trust within the market and relevant stakeholders. In turn, this alliance will be significant for the African innovation and technology ecosystem as it will provide access to Builder.ai Studio Pro and tools. This contribution will drive innovation and economic growth across Africa.

Algeria Venture

Algeria Venture, also known as A-Venture, is a state-owned startup accelerator in Algeria aimed at fostering startup innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. Through its range of programs, the backing of governmental and financial institutions, Algeria Venture plays a significant role in nurturing the startup ecosystem and driving economic growth in Algeria. This partnership is a significant step towards promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. AfriLabs and Algeria Venture intend to facilitate their cooperation by focusing on initiatives for the benefit of Algerians and members of AfriLabs. The partnership will also enable both organizations to share knowledge, resources, and expertise that will drive sustainable growth and development on the continent.

Renew Capital

Renew Capital is an Africa-focused impact investment firm that backs innovative companies with high-growth potential. Renew Capital manages investments made on behalf of the Renew Capital Angels, a global network of angel investors, foundations and family offices who seek financial returns and sustainable social impact. The partnership will provide a platform for African startups to access capital and grow, and It will help to spur the wave of change that African innovators and entrepreneurs have long sought. Connecting investors to innovative companies and startups will create economic and social value not just in Africa, but throughout the world.



Working Mother's Guide

The working mother's guide was launched by Jennifer Okeke-Ojiudu, AfriLabs' Senior Ecosystem Engagement Manager at this year's Annual Gathering. AfriLabs is committed to creating an inclusive ecosystem for parents, particularly women. To this end, AfriLabs launched the Working Mother's Guide at this year's Annual Gathering on October 11th, under the Gender and Inclusion track. The guide is designed to provide support and guidance to working mothers, especially those in the technology and innovation space, to help them balance their work and family responsibilities. As a member of the community, you are encouraged to endorse and commit to adopting the initiative to support working mothers across Africa.

[Find the guide here.](#)

AfriLabs Connect Deal Room



The AfriLabs Connect Deal Room was launched by Ajibola Odukoya, AfriLabs' Chief Operation Officer at this year's Annual Gathering. The AfriLabs Connect Deal Room (ACDR) is a platform based initiative of AfriLabs designed to tackle the inherent issues of identifying, funding and accessing investible startups of the African innovation ecosystem valued at \$6.6 billion as at 2021 according to the 2021 Global Startup Ecosystem Report by Startup Genome. The mission of the initiative is to facilitate financing for innovative startups across various sectors in Africa and providing investment funds access to a Pan African pipeline of investible and de-risked startups.

The ACDR will enable investors and funds register their portfolio of startups into an exclusive pool, to be selected to match/link with investors and funds based on both parties requirements i.e ticket sizes, sector of interest and other criteria, in addition to follow-on support by the AfriLabs ecosystem of over 400 physical innovation and technology hubs in 53 countries. This initiative will be managed on the AfriLabs Connect; a purpose-built ecosystem engagement platform that brings together the largest community of innovation enablers in Africa.



AfriLabs Connect Deal Room (ACDR) is targeted at hubs who have mature startups looking to scale with Series A, Series B and Series C type of funds. We've lined up an investor pipeline that has Africa in mind. They are adapting their business processes to the continent, and they are ready to work with startups looking to scale up."

*- Ajibola Odukoya,
Chief Operating Officer, AfriLabs.*

AfriLabs Connect 2.0

AfriLabs Connect 2.0 was also launched at this year's Annual Gathering event, this digital ecosystem engagement platform is designed to empower the African innovation ecosystem to thrive, accelerate and transform the world. The upgraded platform now includes a new member portal environment that provides a more personalized experience for members. A new portal management system allows members to manage their profiles, connect with other members, and access exclusive content. With seamless LinkedIn enabled sign up and login, it's now easier than ever to join our community of innovation enablers in Africa. Be a part of the digital revolution.

Join AfriLabs Connect today <https://africonnect.net/>

Innovation Tool Kit by GIZ Make IT

GIZ Make IT in Africa, a German development agency, is also the lead sponsor for the AfriLabs Annual Gathering event 2023. They launched the OIP Toolkit at this year's Annual Gathering under the Hub Solutions and Sustainability track. The OIP Toolkit is a guide for African innovation support organizations (ISOs) who want to increase collaboration readiness among SGBs and large enterprises from the private and public sectors in their ecosystem. Collaboration between these different stakeholders through a process of open innovation offers a pathway to delivering innovative solutions to formidable problems at scale.

Learn more about [the OIP Toolkit GIZ OIP Toolkit](#)

Sharing the outcomes of AEDIB 2.0

During the AfriLabs Annual Gathering 2023, Hon. Belén Calvo Uyarra, EU Ambassador to Rwanda, spoke about AEDIB 2.0, an initiative that aims to strengthen the African-European digital innovation ecosystem by supporting local digital innovation and start-up ecosystems in Africa and facilitating collaboration between European and African Digital Innovation Hubs. AEDIB 2.0 has three concrete objectives that are vital in fortifying this innovation bridge:

1. **Enhancing Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy and Regulatory Environment for Twin Digital and Green Transition:** Guided by evidence-based policies, the ambition is to create an enabling regulatory environment conducive to innovation and private sector growth, ensuring a flourishing ecosystem.
2. **Building, Strengthening, and Connecting Digital Innovation Ecosystems for Twin Digital and Green Transition:** The initiative aims to equip Digital Innovation Hubs with the necessary skills and connections, empowering them to drive transformative change within the innovation ecosystem.
3. **Promoting Innovative Financing for Twin Digital and Green Transition:** The commitment is to facilitate financial support for ventures, establish links with investor networks and development banks, and foster the scale-up of enterprises to drive sustainable growth and development.



The AfriLabs Annual Gala

The Ministry of ICT Rwanda & AfriLabs co-hosted a vibrant Gala celebrating African culture and innovation. The theme of the event was "The Art in our Culture," and Esther Kunda, Director General of Innovation & Emerging Technology at the Ministry of ICT & Innovation, Rwanda, eloquently spoke at the Gala, emphasizing the importance of embracing our diverse cultural heritage.

The Gala served as a dynamic intersection where different African regions proudly displayed their unique cultures, promoting inclusivity, cultural exchange, and innovation. The evening delivered an enchanting journey through African and international cuisine, a captivating fashion showcase by 360 Creative Innovation HUB, and mesmerizing cultural performances by the talented Inyamibwa Cultural Troupe.





High-Level Dialogue



The AfriLabs Annual Gathering 2023 was a transformative event that brought together visionaries, governments, startups, investors, policymakers, and world-class thought leaders to drive sustainable growth and innovation on the continent. One of the highlights of the event was the High-Level Dialogue, which featured esteemed speakers such as Esther Kunda, Director General of Innovation & Emerging Technologies in Rwanda, and Rebecca Enonchong, Founder and CEO of AppsTech and AfriLabs Trustee.



The dialogue focused on the core policy challenges faced by African technology and creative startups, including access to capital, regulatory frameworks, and infrastructure development, and identified innovative opportunities within these challenges. The speakers discussed the critical role of collaboration between governments, private sectors, and innovation hubs in creating supportive ecosystems for startups to scale. The key takeaways from the dialogue included

the need to de-risk private investors, provide guaranteed mechanisms, and create tailored procurement laws for startups. The dialogue also emphasized the importance of prioritizing innovation capacity building and identifying and sharing practices that work. Finally, AfriLabs and ABAN were positioned as policy and program aggregators for the high-level dialogue implementation.

The attendees of the High-Level Dialogue included:

1. Esther Kunda Director General, Innovation & Emerging Technologies, Rwanda. Representing Honourable Paula Ingabire, Minister of ICT and Innovation in the Government of Rwanda.
2. Rebecca Enonchong, Founder and CEO, AppsTech, Co-Founder of I/O Spaces and AfriLabs Trustee. – USA/Cameroon.
3. Anna Ekeledo, Executive Director AfriLabs – Pan- African.
4. Tamer Taha, Advisor to the Minister, representing Dr Raina Al-Mashat, Minister of International Cooperation of Egypt.
5. Tomi Davies, Founding President, African Business Angel Network-Nigeria. 6. Honourable Ndonga Christian, The Former Minister of Youth, Athletes, Leisure and Entrepreneurial Leadership of Chad.
7. Mariam Kane, Director of Innovation, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Innovation and Modernisation of Administration – Mauritania.
8. Sid Ali Zerrouki, CEO, Algerian Ventures, Ministry of Knowledge Economy and Startups and SMEs- Algeria.
9. Treasure Maphanga, Chief Operating Officer AeTrade Group, Rwanda.
10. Aisha Augie, advocate for the Creative and Cultural Sector in Africa and the Creator-General at the Center For Art & Creative Talent -Nigeria.
11. Kudzai Mubaiwa, Founder of iZone Hub- Zimbabwe, AfriLabs Trustee.
12. Moataz Helmy, Board Chair, AfriLabs – Egypt

