



AFRILABS ANNUAL
GATHERING
2021

AFRILABS ANNUAL GATHERING REPORT **21**

AfriLabs at 10: A Decade of
Empowering and Inspiring
Innovation Across Africa

27th October - 28th October, 2021

Transcorp Hilton, Maitama
Abuja, Nigeria.

Day 1

(27th October 2021)

The 2021 AfriLabs Annual Gathering commenced on Wednesday, the 27th of October 2022 with a brief cultural performance at 10:00 am. The Master of Ceremony Mark Dodsworth introduced himself and welcomed everyone present, stating that this year's Gathering was unique as AfriLabs was celebrating her 10th year Anniversary. After the morning energizers and stating the ground rules for the Gathering, he proceeded to introduce Anna Ekeledo, the Executive Director of AfriLabs to give the welcome address and officially open the Gathering.

Welcome Address

by Anna Ekeledo, Executive Director, AfriLabs



Anna Ekeledo started by thanking the participants present both virtually and physically at the event. She welcomed the hubs, partners and guests to AfriLabs 10th Anniversary celebration themed “AfriLabs at 10: A Decade of Empowering and Inspiring Innovation across Africa”. According to Anna Ekeledo, AfriLabs started with 5 innovation hub members across 4 African countries and has grown to 320 innovation hub members across 51 African countries. Anna Ekeledo also stated the following; AfriLabs is a community of people who are passionate about contributing to the growth of their communities, countries and the

continent of Africa by supporting and building successful ventures, building the ecosystem and have built hub communities made up of inspiring entrepreneurs, innovators, developers, investors and other stakeholders within the ecosystem. She further stated that AfriLabs has come far because of the amazing people who work tirelessly within the communities across Africa. She reiterated the vision of AfriLabs which is a “thriving innovation economy in Africa, driven by the power of her

community”. She said this means an Africa driven by innovative solutions across all sectors and industries in a significant way that contributes to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the continent and African citizens. She mentioned that later in the course of the event, AfriLabs 10 Year Road Map will be presented and she invited all present both on-site and online to contribute to the realization of the dream. She also requested that everyone should celebrate with AfriLabs for her 10 years journey as a community and as an ecosystem. Once again, she thanked members, partners, and guests who were present and who have also supported AfriLabs throughout the years.

Anna Ekeledo then invited Michael Oluwagbemi, Co-founder Wenvovation Hub Nigeria and AfriLabs Board Chair 2014-2017 and Trustee to welcome the guest to Abuja.

Welcome Remark

by Michael Oluwagbemi.

Michael Oluwagbemi recognized all visitors and dignitaries from outside Nigeria to the 6th Edition of the AfriLabs Annual Gathering. He recalled many years ago when the viability of the innovation ecosystem was questioned and the seeming impossibility to realize the dream of AfriLabs looked huge. He announced that in the year 2021, these doubts have been cleared. He spoke of the great success of AfriLabs in 10 years

stating that over \$1.5b has been invested within the ecosystem, 5 unicorns produced and a lot of emerging startups across Africa. He mentioned that Africa has taken the lead as an African is currently the richest man in the world, by name, Elon Musk, a South African. According to Michael Oluwagbemi, Africa will be built by the creative energies of her youth as the continent not only has the potential to show the rest



Keynote Address 1

Rebecca Enonchong, AfriLabs Board Chair 2017-2021.



Rebecca Enonchong recalled her speech 2 years ago in Addis Ababa where she spoke about the power of the AfriLabs community and how strong her voice could be if AfriLabs was one unit. In a way to prove her statement, she spoke about her arrest a few months ago in her country, Cameroon, and how the voice of the community resulted in her release. Rebecca Enonchong stated that the AfriLabs community is incredibly powerful and that no matter what is thrown at the community, she moves. “We move as a community, we move as a force,” she said. She also said the community sometimes underestimates her power because she doesn't understand how to exert the power

she holds. Rebecca said that AfriLabs will change regulations in every single country on the continent to enable digital economies to grow; economies that are not reliant on money coming from elsewhere. She stated “We Move” and asked everyone in the hall to say so while standing and demonstrating the punch line. Rebecca thanked everyone who had supported her through her experiences and journey. She recognized AfriLabs early founders and also congratulated Moetaz Helmy and the new board stating that the board will help AfriLabs move further.

Master of Ceremony Mark Dodsworth welcomed all those online and introduced the next speaker who joined online.

Keynote Address 2

Marieme Dieng, Lead of Global Innovation and Strategy for Africa at 500 Global

Marieme Dieng thanked AfriLabs for the opportunity to speak. She apologized for not making it to Abuja in person and stated that it was as a result of the covid-19 restrictions. In her statement, she said that Global Innovation and Strategy for Africa at 500 Global, previously known as 500 Startup as a firm, is actively investing in the continent as the firm believes in the importance of supporting the growth of the African startups' ecosystem and its promising potential. She said the firm recognizes the challenges of entrepreneurs in their pursuit



and also the strong foundations laid by existing local investors and institutions upon which the ecosystems have been building in the past years. As such there must be continuous building and scaling of the

ecosystem and the relentless work that has led the ecosystem to date.

She added that with \$2.9 billion raised by African startups in 2021 and other notable achievements, it is important to note that it is only the beginning of sustainable technological development across the continent. According to Marieme Dieng, entrepreneurship is not a new concept in the continent of Africa as it has always been a founding pillar in Africa's economic development in many different ways. The work done by Global Innovation and Strategy for Africa at 500 has been and will continue to bring awareness and light to something that has always been there and collectively find ways to harness that towards addressing Africa's most pressing and relevant issues.

Marieme Dieng highlighted some valid points below.

The African startup ecosystem should be built on the pre-existing entrepreneurial mindset while creating different shades of support systems for both tech-enabled and scalable startups as well as SMEs that are important to Africa's economic growth.

The African startup ecosystem is experiencing transformation through a combination of technological advancement and entrepreneurship. The copy and paste concept does not work well when faced with cultural-historical and economical differences. There should be a focus on specific challenges and competitive advantages of each ecosystem to facilitate better performance. For instance, the Nigerian ecosystem has continued to impress with the quality and performance of its startups. Egypt, Mauritius, South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana among others are also doing great in this regard.

Startups' performance, capital and talent are extremely important but must be laid upon strong foundations of platforms that allow the amplification of the impact and influence in the evolution of markets.

Smart Africa aims to develop a single digital African economy with the direct support of 32 heads of State which has been a significant drive-in setting the foundations for future initiatives with continental impact as being key to startups' performance, capital, and talent.

Governments play an important role in ensuring that startup ecosystems are built with sustainability and longevity and not only for publicity.

More Remarks

The work done by ecosystem stakeholders should always cause each country to leverage on competitive advantages and utilize its existing resources to activate the growth of the ecosystem while building bridges with other African countries to truly ensure knowledge transfer and best practices among ourselves.

In addition to intended direct interventions, there must be the creation of spaces for active conversations and reflections on the existing infrastructural hurdles and challenges that prevent the continent from growing into an integrated market.

The development of the ecosystem will take time therefore in addition to capital, startups performance, talent platforms, market reach and government support, the continent tremendously needs time and we must be aware that we are contributing to building a future that we may not live long enough to enjoy but also realize that it will not take away the merit in the work done.

After the keynote addresses, Mark Dodsworth engaged the delegates in a 5 minutes energizer and then proceeded to invite Markos Lemma, the moderator of the opening panel discussion of the Gathering.

[Video Presentation on the Evolution of the Innovation Ecosystem in Africa](#)



Panel Discussion – The Evolution of the Innovation Ecosystem in Africa

Organized by GIZ Make-IT and AfriLabs

Key Points Discussed

Evolution outlook of the ecosystem at the Pan-African level and local hubs

Focus on a better understanding of local hubs networks, mandates and objectives.

Learning about setting up new local hub networks.

Demystifying the role of hubs across Africa.

There are lots of uncertainties in defining hubs. Knowing if a hub is an accelerator, incubator or making space is important. 25% of hubs do not follow any of these terms.

Moderator:

Markos Lemma,
CoFounder & CEO of
Iceaddis, Ethiopia.

Panelists:

Nekesa Were, Director of
Strategy, AfriLabs

Benjamin Meier, Regional
Advisor to the GIZ Make-IT
Nneka Ukay, Executive
Secretary at Innovation
Support Network (ISN
Hubs) Nigeria

Dr Robert Karanja, Co-
founder of Villgro Africa
and Chairman of the Board
of ASSEK, Kenya

Dario Giuliani, Founder and
Director of Briter Bridges

Sustainability of hubs through funding.

The striking increase in the number of hubs across the different countries over the years.

The fact that hubs consist of young people and harsh conditions under which hubs carry out their activities means products and services from these hubs will be very resilient and practical, making solutions scalable.

The diversity of members/ hubs is of great advantage.

Successful founders are beginning to reinvest into the ecosystem.

Giving to the ecosystem is paramount. We thrive when we come together.

Collaborations between government, stakeholders and other agencies have helped in the growth of the ecosystem.

Visibility, access to opportunities, collaboration, validation and much more are benefits of being part of a hub.

In Africa, we have more youths than jobs and the fastest way to solve this problem is Entrepreneurship.

AfriLabs will ensure that innovators get the support they need.

To get the feedback of the delegates on the roles of national networks in the innovation ecosystem, a Survey was carried out.

One of the key suggestions from the survey was that the name local hubs network be modified to become national hubs network.

Post the panel discussion, the MC allowed participants to share among themselves what they learned and also what surprised them the most about the panel discussion. The responses were thus;

John, Ataka Hub South Sudan:

John was surprised that the mapping focused on countries that had already made great success in terms of the number of startups in those countries and that emerging countries were not in focus. He said that is not encouraging and does not position these upcoming countries in a better space for investors to come in.

Uchenna, Eduform Technique Hub:

Uchenna speaking for her friend from Kenya talked about the lack of collaborations among hubs.

Douglas, HapaSpace Ghana:

He expressed his surprise at the growth in the ecosystem even though most of its potential had not been well harnessed, for example, government and academic institutions.



POEM ON UNITY

by Oscar A. Nchaso Bekari

Founder & Managing Director en Dreams Hub, Equatorial Guinea

Highlight: Energy is you, Energy is me, Energy is us winning together, Unity.

It ended with a round of applause as Mark also announced that it was Oscar's birthday and everyone sang him a happy birthday song. Rebecca Enonchong was invited to introduce the next speaker who she said has been an inspiration to her and many more around the continent of Africa and the world at large.

Keynote Address

Dr Oby Ezekwesili, Former Minister of Education (Nigeria), Current Chair of the School of Politics, Policy and Governance and senior fellow at Yale University.

Dr Oby Ezekwesili expressed delight to be on the list of a selected few to deliver a speech. She appreciated Rebecca Enonchong for her great achievements and also celebrated the entire AfriLabs community for pushing Africa forward. She said AfriLabs has achieved so much in 10 years and now has the opportunity to think about the next decade which is close to the aspirational date of the sustainable development goals. 17 of those goals are most relevant



to the continent of Africa. She mentioned, however, that there is so much more to do as covid-19 brought a reset and as such, every country has to rethink and reimagine their roles in the world, leaving Africa at a disadvantage with leaders who fail at this task. She left AfriLabs with a charge to think of the Macro picture of the next decade while paying attention to the micro details.

Highlights

AfriLabs macro strategy must look at the critical value points that Africa's continental free trade agreement can unleash.

Implementation and alignment of internal policies to support the kind of impact that growth should have must be done.

We have to quadruple growth to get close to what begins to make a dent on poverty as Africa has been hit with a downward movement since the pandemic.

Data analysis from the World Bank says that by the year 2030, 90% of extremely poor people will be in Africa. This is not the Africa of our dreams, hence the need to push for growth.

We must use technology to drive growth down by using its impact on distributing opportunities as a way of canvassing quicker reforms. This will spur the necessary market reforms. She urged AfriLabs to understand that there is so much leadership required to create the pathway toward a macro emphasis on disrupting politics and governance.

If technology can disrupt financial structures and other sectors then it can disrupt its greatest barrier to growth which is bad leadership and governance from bad leaders in Africa. This

generation must get uncomfortable and not be carried away with startups doing great but must push for the right things to be done and keep doing such.

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Sound policies, dynamic strong institutions, right priorities of investment in sectors that enable the availability and accessibility of public goods to citizens and businesses must be practiced. This will bring the much-desired growth in the continent of Africa.

She reiterated her belief in the power of the ecosystem (AfriLabs).

Mark Dodsworth rounded up the session with a call for a round of applause for Dr Oby Ezekwesili. Mark Dodsworth then requested that participants go for a tea break and resume in 15 minutes.

Tea Break



Noon Sessions

Keynote Presentation

Papa Amadou Sarr, Ministre, Délégué général à l'Entreprenariat Rapide des Femmes et des Jeunes à la présidence de la République du Sénégal.

Moderator:

Michael Oluwagbemi, Co-founder Wennovation Hub Nigeria and AfriLabs Board Chair 2014-2017 introduced Papa Amadou Sarr to give the keynote address virtually.



Keynote Speaker:

Papa Amadou Sarr, the General Delegate for Entrepreneurship, the Republic of Senegal. In his role, he is responsible for about \$50 million a year funds entirely dedicated to the promotion of entrepreneurship and job creation, with a particular focus on youth and women throughout Senegal. He worked as the Director-General for the financial sector and competitiveness and as a senior technical advisor to the Ministry of Economy, finance and planning from April 2015 to December 2017. As such, he was alternate Governor for Senegal, of the African Development Bank, a member of the board of Governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as Chairman of the Board of funds of African de guarantee de cooperation economie. Before joining the Senegalese government in 2015, Mr Papa worked in the United States as a senior program officer for the Bill and Melinda gates foundation from April 2013 to April 2015. He holds a certificate in public financial management from the JFK School of Government of Harvard University.

Papa Amadou Sarr stated that he is pleased and honored to be speaking with all present on-site and online about what they do at the general delegation for scholarship in supporting youth and female entrepreneurs. He said his team, unfortunately, had prepared his speech in French and suggested it should be switched on to French if the translation was available to all. Papa Amadou Sarr also shared his presentation for all to see. He said 85% of entrepreneurs in the last five years in Sub Saharan Africa, have issues relating to

financing, access to market and lack of experience and this is a challenge that is being solved with the facilitation of incubators that support young entrepreneurs.

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In his presentation, he said fortunately, the work done by networks of incubators or hubs will help them get access to technology, R&D, networking opportunities, expertise and soft training that will help them raise some funds and also become big entrepreneurs in future. For instance, if we take the example of what we as a government of Senegal have been doing, in terms of support to startups, innovators and entrepreneurs across the country, the government has been carrying out awareness and effective support of current government entities here in the country and supporting the entrepreneurs. He said in his graph, there is no sufficient effective financing and support from the government to the private sector and mainly entrepreneurs and startups. That's why they decided to have some institutions and support in terms of capitalization, financing, and trading and created an ecosystem of partnerships between startups and SMEs.

In 2018, the head of state of Senegal sent a report to the general delegation for public entrepreneurship, which Papa Amadou Sarr has the honor of Chairing, and they have worked to deliver on the national strategic numeric or digital plan 2025. They'll be working together with key incubators and partners, one or two of them sitting at AfriLabs who are some of the main and excellent incubators in the country. They have also worked together with the Ministry of Finance to get a startup act in 2020 in less than a year, which has been the fastest startup over the last 10 years across the continent. They are also working together for an IT path and are building what they call the Mohammed Bin Zayed Center for Innovation, which is the biggest, about 40,000 square meters of space for startups and entrepreneurs focusing on digital in Dakar, which will be the regional hub. They have also as a state, been working on installing the super calculator in West Africa, which will be pushing Senegal into a cluster and last but not the least, data centers for chair-free, which are been built not only by the government who are already functional but also the private sector, namely around three and half of both global telecom companies. They have also been able to profit on a rapid expansion of what they call the SI which are the incubators but also the entities that support entrepreneurs.

Today, Senegal is among the countries that are innovators and the countries that are also shapers, but Papa Amadou Sarr is not satisfied with the rank they have, which is 105 out of 161 of the most innovative countries. Still, they are 8 in Sub Saharan Africa behind Mauritius, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Rwanda, Cape Verde, but they want to be in the top five over the next few years. What they see as challenges facing the startups and SMEs in the digital innovation sector are the lack of pre-incubation and incubation, but also the support to materialize the proof of concept, R&D and move on. And for startups that are in the phase of looking for funding, it is crucial to support them. He further said that the DER has been working over the last three years, not only with the startups in the digital economy, but other sectors to support more than 125 entrepreneurs for more than \$165 million, throughout the 14 regions in 45 departments across the country.

Thousands of entrepreneurs have been trained, formalized and helped to access training programs, capacity building programs and ecosystems. They are also working towards what is called “D-Hub”, which is the hub for the GDR that has the main objective of fostering innovation and also unleashing the growth potential of our country in different sectors.

Papa Amadou Sarr mentioned that the objective is to position Senegal, among the top 10 hubs of innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa over the next five years. They would finance the patient enterprises, which impacts, innovate, and thinks out of the box the most. This support will be aligned with financial products accessible to the startups. He stated that they are making waves in terms of supporting the entrepreneurs. As a government, they are taking records of funding to startups in equity (fairness), which was not done initially because they believe that to unleash the true potential of those startups and young entrepreneurs, you have to not only trust them but have to invest in the companies and make sure that they have the proper training. At that, they will make sure that when they succeed, they support the rest of the young brothers and sisters, who would also work together with them at the universities across the country to help establish hubs of innovation, not only in the capital city, but

the other key regions where you have universities. They make sure to dematerialize and digitalize the whole process of facilitating and having access to business and financial services and non-financial services for those startups and companies. For that, they established an Innovation Support Fund of more than \$60 million and are working on raising that every year. From 2018, they have invested more than \$15 million, intending to raise an additional \$25 million over the next three years to support SMEs startups, and also build a strong and capable entrepreneurial ecosystem conducive for all entrepreneurs. Focusing of course on youths and women (as women count for more than 70% of the general overall portfolio at the delegation).

Finally, the mission of the D-hub, which will catalyze a reference of actors within the ecosystem will include capacity building and the strengthening of this ecosystem by supporting them. Also helping them to inspire, to innovate, to go abroad, leave the frontiers of Senegal and West Africa and tackle the challenges of the big and affordable market of Nigeria of over 200 million inhabitants. Papa Amadou Sarr said that's why he is really happy that his team are at the 2021 AfriLabs Annual Gathering in Abuja to see how they can get more partnerships, supporting entrepreneurs in Senegal and Nigeria, creating a bigger market with the ECOWAS so that the Nigerian startups will also go back to Senegal, invest in the country, and help entrepreneurs in Senegal go into Nigeria and help support the ecosystem of economic prosperity between the ECOWAS region among the countries and amongst partners.

In his closing remark, Papa Amadou Sarr commended the work AfriLabs is doing and said it's only with supporting technology, building capacity, funding and also rendering financial services to startups and SMEs that Africa will be a greater place for investment, prosperity and a greater place to live.

Michael Oluwagbemi thanked Papa Amadou Sarr for his presentation. He announced that the breakout session for UNIBASEL Workshop had already kicked off at the Niger/ Enugu Hall and urged those who registered for the workshop to quietly move to the hall. He introduced the next panel session and the panelists.



Panel Discussion – Bridging the Gap in Policy and Digital Innovation in Africa (Organized by the AU and AfriLabs)

Moderator:

Michael Oluwagbemi, Co-founder Wennovation Hub Nigeria and AfriLabs Board Chair 2014-2017 and Trustees

Panelists:

Ifeoluwa Adebayo, Special Assistant to the Nigerian Vice President on Innovation

Carine Vavasseur, Cheffe de Division Innovation et Animation d'Ecosystème

Ahunna Eziakonwa, UNDP Assistant Administrator, and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa at the rank of Assistant Secretary-General (Virtually Present)

Michael Oluwagbemi acknowledged the fact that a larger part of the day has been spent talking about the impact of government on the community. He stated that politics precedes policy and policy precedes programs. The linkage between politics, which is often what is promised and what is done, which is the program; is policymaking. According to him, it is true that young people are often very interested in the glamor and the glitz of politics; they like to participate, form different hashtags and movements. But the glitz of Politics does have its glamor and its attraction and a lot of young people do get involved. When it comes to program implementation, 99.99% of the people in this room are involved in implementing one program or the other. We are often reached out to when the World Bank creates grants and when AFD creates that investment program. When the government wants to do something for the ecosystem they reach out to us because we execute programs but where we are often missing is that which is not glamorous, and which is the subject of the conversation this afternoon; Policymaking.

Michael Oluwagbemi continued

thus; Policymaking is the actual link between glamorous politics and energetic program execution. And if we do not want to lose the plots on program execution, we must execute programs to at least resemble what was promised in the political arena, then we must be involved in policymaking. He then said that is why the panel is a very important one that everyone present both on-site and online should pay attention to, as he introduced the concepts of the discussion.

Across Africa, technology hubs are developing, with more than 130 new jobs opening in the past two years. Innovation policy has rapidly become a fad for national governments and international donors. Prior to that policy, efforts were essentially centered on traditional research. Despite the ever-increasing policy attention from policy donors, international donors, development bank's and partners; startups and technology companies continue to complain of unfavorable policy positions across Africa which are inclusive of erratic regulation of innovation, heavy taxation, lack of access to broadband infrastructure, and poor educational systems that can hardly sustain a viral and viable innovation ecosystem.

According to Micheal Oluwagbemi, the question that the panel seeks to answer is about how this gap can be bridged. The role stakeholders in the sector have to play, the role of governments, the role of development organizations, the role of the private sector and the role of innovators in policymaking and implementation. He then welcomed the guests and panelists, Ifeoluwa Adebayo, Special Assistant to the Nigerian Vice President on Innovation, Ahunna Eziakonwa UNDP Assistant Administrator who joined virtually and Carine Vavasseur from Senegal's Delegation for Rapid Entrepreneurship Transformation as Michael said he liked to call it in English.

Michael Oluwagbemi made the session more of a question and answer to allow the points made by panelists to be more direct.

Question:

Michael Oluwagbemi
Is Innovation policymaking just an infant? And why is it important? Why should we care?

Answer:

Carine Vavasseur Carine thanked AfriLabs for the opportunity of being present at the Annual Gathering. She said as the Senegal government, they could not imagine not being at the gathering because it's really important as the minister had mentioned, to be connected with all the ecosystems that are present. She said her mother tongue is French and would like to go deep into what she will be sharing. And so she switched to French.

Carine stated that Challenges like: access to education, health and financial inclusion require that there should be answers and approaches according to the ecosystem in which they are working. She added that they have to create models, get inspiration from proxy models, and policies adapted to reality.

In her words, Innovation helps us to fix those problems efficiently, create new models and adapt them to our ecosystem. We are talking about facing challenges that are socio-economic, like job creation, ensuring that they

are in the perspective of our youth, our women and the near future generation. And clearly, it's not a fashion but it's a reality in which innovation is an important cornerstone.

How do we face the issue of formulating innovation policies? We face it by implementing efficient actions that enable us to develop the market and help the entrepreneurs also to fail because his failures are part of what is needed to give entrepreneurs latitude to test new approaches or new solutions with the support of the government with connections.

Who are the actors in the ecosystem? Whether they are bigger companies or medium enterprises people will come in to collaborate and to innovate with. They are models we are testing in the market of innovation. So it is for us to ensure we attract investment at the international level, and also national investors that will invest. And concretely, if I should give examples on how we can face the problem as government, this problem that I raised around education for instance, yes, we need to create schools, universities,

but clearly, do we face the issue of mass of people that are going to be trained now and in the future by using these classical approaches to infrastructure? No, we have to rethink education by thinking about innovation, digital, which our schools have. We have a Virtual University in Senegal, with open digital spaces that enable us to train more youth and also ensure the quality of the training and the methodological approach to adopt or adapt the model on the digital. You must also choose a method that goes with it. On the financial issue, I think we will see 100 innovations? The boom of the use of mobile money will not have been on the table. We see all the financial services on the digital platform. We can see in the statistics that FinTech is driving more investments. So, innovation in financial inclusion is important.

While Carine Vavasseur was speaking, Mark Dodsworth quickly interrupted with an apology for not announcing the UNIBASEL Workshop that was ongoing at the Niger/Enugu Hall. He asked everyone who registered for the workshop to quickly move out to join Felista who will lead them to the hall where the workshop is being held.

Michael Oluwagbemi then seized the opportunity to thank Carine and said he would come back to her but needed to give other panelists the time to speak.

Question:

Michael Oluwagbemi

Is this a fad? Why is innovation policy of importance?

Answer:

Ifeoluwa Adebayo

When we look at global advancements, historically, you'll find that there was a time when we had what was called the "Third Industrial Revolution", which was a lot of manufacturing. And at the time, the African continent wasn't able to catch up to it but we're moving into what a lot of people call the "fourth industrial revolution" now, which is more of a focus on innovation and technology. What the opportunity presents for Africa is an opportunity to leapfrog and when Carine was speaking, she had mentioned how you cannot copy and paste models, but you can adapt them locally.

What we found in Africa largely is, there's been a very big gap between the policymakers and the actual industry and what is required. So what you find is, the industry and policymakers are usually going in opposite directions. But when you look at other clients, the United States, for example, you find that innovation companies, tech companies, creative companies, actually have budgets for lobbying governments, they have people that are engaging directly with the government consistently, they have seats at the table. But for the African ecosystem, it's been parallel lines that don't meet. And I think that's something that a lot of people are beginning to take a close look at. I know Senegal has the startup bill. Tunisia has the startup bill, Nigeria is at an advanced stage of its startup bill. In Nigeria, for example, we call our startup bill process, The Big

Tent approach, where we have the private sector, government, policymakers, development partner, finance institutions, everybody at the table, to look at what we need to do to support this ecosystem and to support the space going forward. But just to close out, I think we must also get to the stage in Africa where there is direct interest from the government itself if we want to take advantage of the changes happening globally. And when I mean from government, I mean from the people at the very top of government. So when you look at Rwanda, for example, as a government that has shown specific interest in

this space and has provided support for the space, Senegal is also doing a lot of work in this space. In Nigeria, for example, for the first time, the President himself hosted startups in 2016. I think it coincided with a visit of Mark Zuckerberg, we had Mark himself visit some of the startups, the Vice President himself has done a tough tech with the tech companies, went to Silicon Valley with a couple of this company's and metrics investors, that kind of direct interest from governments in Africa must continue to bridge the gap between innovation policy organization.

Question:

Michael Oluwagbemi

Michael Oluwagbemi thanked Ife for his contribution and threw the next question to Ahunna who was present online.

Michael Oluwagbemi said, Ifeoluwa talked about the big tent approach, and the alternate third party in the room when we talk about policy in Africa, is the development sector. So you have the private sector, you are the public sector and the development sector, and you represent a big part of the development tech sector in the UNDP and the United Nations. Now the biggest criticism is that the development sector takes the approach of copy and paste, what works in Latin America will work in Africa. What works in Asia will work in Africa, everything. Africa becomes like a test tube, or a testing ground, experimentation

zone for different policies that worked somewhere else that should work here. Can you speak to that criticism? And how should the development sector approach policymaking? Should they take the approach of imposing because they have enough leverage with the government and speak directly to the government? And you'll say, this is the policy that we've seen in Brazil, Nigeria needs a ticket, copy and paste it and do it? Or should they have a more grassroot-oriented approach where they are engaging with an ecosystem to find out what they want, What they need, and fit it within that context, to implement policy? Can you speak to that?

Answer:

Ahunna Eziakonwa

Let me first thank AfriLabs for inviting me to participate in this space, and congratulate you for this double-digit milestone. I wish I was there with you. I was just in Abuja last week, but the timing just didn't fit. I see some familiar faces in the audience, including some UNDP staff. So a big shout out to the accelerator lab, colleagues who are in the room. Interesting question. What you just described is the development of the past. And we've seen over decades of development practice that copy and pasting do not work and It is a flawed development approach. What innovation and digital technologies have brought to us is the fact that homegrown solutions are the magic for development, you have the solutions within the communities. And as a development agency, UNDP is picking this up in ways that we never, ever imagined that practically in every innovation challenge, we have development solutions come out of those from the communities themselves, people have ideas of what is going to solve their problems. Development entities, such as ourselves, have to now position themselves not the programmers or the idea givers, but the facilitators for these ideas to emerge and then to scale them up. This is why UNDP has established the accelerator Labs, which are indigenous, they are all staffed across the world, by national offices. Their role is to dig deep into the ecosystem within the country and harness the homegrown ideas and solutions that are applicable for our development challenges of

today. And this is bearing fruits, we're seeing that the best ideas come in from within the countries not from outside. It does not, however, mean that Africa cannot learn from others. Wherever we've seen developed economies, they have all borrowed ideas from other contexts. We must have a delicate blending of these externally, sort of cooked ideas and the homegrown solutions and basically adapt and reinforce what we have. One approach that we think is really valid is the south-south cooperation, where you exchange ideas between countries that have similar development contexts and trajectories. There you get closer to actually applying what is possible in terms of contextualizing that content.

Question:

Michael Oluwagbemi

If you had to prioritize as a member of the innovation ecosystem in Senegal today what would be your number one priority for the future? I mean, what is the metric that will be driving that priority?

Answer:

Carine Vavasseur

I will provide a transformational structure for the innovation society. I will also create employment and competitiveness. When we talk about efficiency in public policy, we should have in mind KPIs. KPIs enable us to measure the efficiency of these public policies, and because it was said earlier on at the opening the importance to do it such that the entire thing that is structured responds to a vision and a KPI that is clear. The issue of health and industrialization is also now a priority in Senegal.

Question:

Michael Oluwagbemi

What do you say your priorities are, from a Nigerian perspective and why?

Answer:

Ifeoluwa Adebayo

On the Nigerian side, I think at the moment, the government is prioritizing skills and human capacity development, investment, finance; how do we provide the right kind of finance for the ecosystem? Infrastructure; how do we provide the right kind of infrastructure and access for people? And then an enabling environment that speaks to policy? Or can the government and the ecosystem work together to ensure that we have the right enabling environment? And the answer to the question of why is because we've spent the last few years engaging directly with the ecosystem, working very closely with people in the ecosystem and finding out what the key issues are for us in Nigeria. And when we look at the African continent at large, we understand that we must create solutions at scale, because the numbers are really large and the people that we need to reach are large. So when you talk about the issue of health, for example, and health access or you're looking for those that will provide the right kind of solutions and innovation around health access, when you look at financial inclusion, and you're asking what's the percentage of Nigerians? What's the percentage of Africans that are not currently included within the formal financial nets? And how do we reach these people very quickly? With the right kind of impact, you realize that you need to solve the issue of skills, you need to solve the issue of finance, and they need to solve the issue of infrastructure. And beyond that, as the base, you then need to have the right enabling environment for people to be able to innovate and create solutions. Finally, in the public sector, you also find that there is very little innovation happening. That's also a priority. How do we start? The minister of communications and digital economy, for example, consistently speaks about the federal government's plan. How do we ensure that we start to innovate within governments? How do we ensure that we start to get the government itself to innovate within itself? The Vice President once mentioned something around ease of doing business and he had said, beyond the ease of doing business, we also need to look at the ease of doing government business. And so, these are the priorities that we're looking at.

Question:

Michael Oluwagbemi

In terms of the priorities of the international community looking from outside into the continent of Africa, when it comes to innovation can you describe the priorities from your side and why.

Answer:

Ahunna Eziakonwa

I think I would agree with a colleague from Senegal, structural transformation is key. If we just take what happened with COVID-19, where Africa had to rely on other countries for the things that it needs to keep its people alive. Then the global supply chains seized, we were stuck, and started to quickly repurpose to see what could be produced locally. So the fact that the continent still imports more than 80% of what it uses is a problem. It needs to go from the economies of commodities and exportation of raw materials to adding value. Industrializing, that's where you will find jobs. When Ghana produces cocoa and just exports cocoa beans, there are no jobs for them. That's why the Ghanaians will have to cross the Atlantic to go look for jobs where those beans, coffee, cocoa have been processed. So really deploying everything that we need in terms of infrastructure, whether it's energy or even the capacities to transform Africa's rich natural resources into processed and finished goods is a top priority. The second one I think is digital competence. I think that we're talking about innovation today and we know that the shortcut for Africa in terms of accelerated development is in its utilization of digital technologies. But for these to be applicable, we need greater digital competence and governance of these technologies so that they're working for more inclusive economies rather than increasing inequality.

Questions from the Audience to Panelists

Question:

Rebecca Enonchong

How do you reconcile supporting the innovation ecosystem with some of the decisions that the government has taken, which seem to harm the same innovation ecosystem? For instance, the banning of Twitter knowing some of the activities around the #Endsars movement, for instance.

Question:

Kelvin, founder of artificial intelligence hub in Warri Nigeria, Chief promoter of artificial intelligence in Africa

My question is more like a comment, you talked about how we are starting the third industrial revolution and the fourth industrial revolution is powered by artificial intelligence. There have been several job losses, what is our government and what is the African government doing to invest in AI so we do not lose out in the fourth industrial revolution. I have heard so much today but very little about AI and we all know that AI is making the tech billionaires rich. So how much are we investing in AI? And what is the way forward?

Michael Oluwagbemi added:

You have a question about policy dissonance. I think that's the crux of the discussion today, around the gap between policy making and the reality of policy action. Around the question Rebecca asked, I will also add the cryptocurrency regulation overnight that shut down the transaction of cryptocurrencies in Nigeria to the bucket. How do you reconcile that policy dissonance? And of course, to the question around the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and what the government is doing about artificial intelligence and making sure that instead of job losses, we have job creation?

Answer:*Ifeoluwa Adebayo***30**

It is extremely important to find the right balance, especially for Africa, between technology, the growth of technology, regulation, legislation, etc. And I think you will agree with me that the conversation around all these are global conversations and are not peculiar to Nigeria. If you follow China, for example, recently, there has been a massive collapse, clamp down. I've followed consistently on Facebook over the last few weeks. The US Congress has been very, very hard and has followed conversations around the kind of algorithms that are being used and their effects. So I think as we build, we must also build with the understanding and the knowledge of the local realities and the local norms. And also, when you build algorithms, for example, for Africa, are you building algorithms that drive people towards more interest in financial inclusion? So I think it's important to find that balance. And to answer your question specifically, I mean, you've mentioned Crypto, you've mentioned the issue with the ban of a social media platform. I think largely one thing that I spoke at an event last week and one of the things I've said to the founders was, you must make sure that you know the regulations, and the laws within whatever sector you're going into. So you must ensure that you have lawyers on your team, you must ensure that you're consistently ahead of the curve. But also beyond that, when I spoke earlier, I had mentioned that we need to create a gap, right now the ecosystem is moving on a parallel line and the government is also moving on a parallel line. So these are all issues faced by every government across the world (on cryptocurrencies) this is not peculiar to Nigeria, every government globally is still struggling, and sort of playing catch up with the ecosystem. So the Vice President spoke some months ago at an event where he had looked at the traditional banking system and the disruption that the FinTech space is bringing. And he had, at the time, even spoken about the crypto ban. And you know, the Vice President himself said that these are things that need more engagement because it's like the ecosystem doesn't understand the government and the government doesn't understand the ecosystem. And I think that's the importance of panels like this, where someone like me from the government can say to the ecosystem, you need

to engage more, and then those in the ecosystem, like yourself can also put me on the spot and say, Why are you doing this, so our voices continue to add to these conversations and we can continue to move it forward. And I'm sure that over the next few years, both the government and the stakeholders in the ecosystem would have gotten to a much more comfortable space where we're no longer making policies, making laws, making legislation, ahead of engagements but rather engaging before making those words and those policies. To close out, I'll speak about the startup bill which I think is a direct response to the things you've mentioned, where we've said to the ecosystem, you need to come under this big tent where we can all talk together. The Central Bank of Nigeria is involved in the startup bill, the Honorable Minister of Communications and digital economy himself is driving that and has sent a draft to the Ministry of Justice. So we're at a point now where we're working together to prevent these things from happening repeatedly and as such ensure that we have a better outcome.

And to the question on investments in artificial intelligence, I think when I spoke about skills, that was one of the things I was speaking about. So we've been working over the last two years with the African Development Bank, we are currently at the closing ends of those conversations now trying to raise about \$500 million for this ecosystem. One of the key pillars that we'll be supporting is skills, and AI is a very important part of that. But beyond that, what the government is trying to do is to catalyze the space. The government is not trying to play in the space, we're trying to catalyze the space so that private sector entities like yourself can have a sustainable model of running these things. And also, looking at what are the existing traditional systems within our institutions of higher learning and how we can create parallel structures that work with them, engage them and provide the capacity within those institutions, that over time, those institutions themselves can start to churn out the skills that we need across the spaces. I hope I've been able to answer the questions.

Answer:

Carine Vavasseur

I was working somewhere and I went for a contract. We needed to support the government workers especially on digital training, and we could not get connected on WhatsApp. That was one problem we faced in trying to connect and communicate. There are also situations in so many ecosystems and the issue of time, how to manage time, and we need time to put things right so that there will be a correspondence between the ecosystem and then the policies of our governments in different countries. We also as a state, need to have a kind of synergy between the different agencies and ecosystems. If we succeed in having a relationship we will need a change in our attitude as well. When we are working, we have to take a step not to be afraid of transparency.

Question:

Michael Oluwagbemi to Ahunna Eziakonwa

It seems to me that even within the government, there is some level of transliteration that needs to go on. You will have new age, policymakers, technocrats that will come with new political cycles but they will always meet the permanent government in place, which is the bureaucracy. And oftentimes this bureaucracy is way behind when it comes to policymaking for innovation because, by design, bureaucracies don't change. They don't want to change. That's just by design. And that's why they're the permanent government. So, what will you suggest in this kind of dichotomy where you have governments within governments, one part of the government speaking French, the other speaking Japanese, not saying anything about French and Japanese, but when there's a need for us to synergize government policy, because sometimes you see some parts of government that are moving fast, and leaning forward and you see other parts of the government say, no, no, no, no, no, my mandate is to slow progress. How do we reconcile that? How do we overcome that? How does the ecosystem become more understanding? Somebody had mentioned and said that we are a continent that

sends our best to the private sector. And then we send the third class graduates to the civil service. Should we have more? What they call the revolving door, like what happens in other times where you can work in the private sector this year, and you're back in the public sector? I'm back again. And should there be more interactions in terms of personnel exchange of ideas than what we are currently having today?

Answer:

Ahunna Eziakonwa

I think that does happen anyway but maybe not sufficiently. But I think it goes beyond the government. It's really what technology and innovation are driving us to see, the landscape beyond the public sector. And unless we can take seriously this imperative that policies and decisions around these new technologies and this complex environment require collaboration. With a collaboration between the private and public sectors, collaboration with citizens, collaboration with academia, we must make quick progress. So it has to be a convergence of all these entities and assets, to begin to crack some of these and Governments just trying to resolve this on their own is not going to work. Several countries are now trying to come up with laws and governing regimes. We need a new governance architecture around new technologies, one that helps us to drive in the direction of having technology work for Africans, not against them. And it's important also to look at this at the level of Africa, not just country by country. This is why we are curating a space here, of technology leaders on the continent who will come together and you know, look critically at this space and agree on measures that would allow us to leverage technology as that instrument to transform the development space so that it is more inclusive, development is more sustainable, and it is also accelerated so young people have jobs. So I think collaboration is the keyword for me. Beyond just looking at what the public has the capacity to do, it will never have all the capacity to deliver the goods on what we're talking about. So it needs to figure out a way to connect with a larger community.

Question:

Michael Oluwagbemi

I think the policy that hits the road is the policy of money. How do I get taxed? How much money do I take home? How much is the government looking into my bank account? How do I pay my staff on time? Does the government have venture capital money for me? We have at least two government people and two super-government persons in UNDP on these conversations; let's talk about taxes, regulation, and registration. Can our government policy be more progressive? How can they be more accommodating? How can they encourage the growth of startups? while also encouraging startups to give back. At the end of the day, we cannot reap where we did not sow. So I will let each of you respond to these in one minute each.

Answer:

Ifeoluwa Adebayo

The governments in Africa must begin to ensure that the right value that is for Africa comes to Africa, which also builds on the question from Rebecca. The other is the new OECD taxation policy, which I think the Minister of Finance in Nigeria has looked at very closely and is looking at how we can ensure that all these necessary things that are due to Africa come to Africa. But I'm also looking at the conversations around what and who is doing what and ensuring that there is consistency. I mean, just this year, I think Facebook was fined about \$270 million by the EU, and the Facebook CEO had to go see the UN US Congress. But when Africa asks these questions, everybody screams Oh, why are you asking those questions? I think Africa itself must start to understand that we are sovereign nations on our own, and we deserve to ask the right questions. And for the startups, ensure that you register for taxes, ensure that you know your laws, that you know the regulations of your sector as I said before.

Further Answer:

Carine Vavasseur

When you look at the case of Senegal, we have a lot of informal economies. I want to say about 97% of our economy is at the informal level so we have a very small tax base. The country

indeed has a policy that is not necessarily that of giving out incentives. Today, we have tried to create a one-stop hub for the training of entrepreneurs, which enables them in a very fast way to be able to create their companies without really going round and round. And we try to centralize all the mechanisms today and also try to interconnect with taxes and tax administration's and other organizations to ensure that we have all the value chains around this platform. We support entrepreneurs by putting in place funds to be able to support them and also ensure that the funds get to them. And we don't give them very bad conditions like banks, but one of the conditions to be able to have access to the funds is formalization (we have them go into the formal sector). The formalization is also supported by the mechanism that we have in place and we're trying to adopt the programs to incentivize the entrepreneurs to ensure that for them to have access to the market, they must be formalized. We also have them to ensure that tax is reduced. And I think it's a work in progress. Today, we have a part of taxation that is largely facilitated for startups, and especially in the first years of startups. We have a startup pack for these startups to ensure that the taxation is reduced, and that's the first step, but we are going to continue to construct to be able to reduce their tax burdens.

Contribution:

Ahunna Eziakonwa

The points made by the Nigerian counselor are valid. There are three points I'd like to add. One is the global situation of taxes, and Africa is losing close to \$80 billion in terms of revenue from taxation, so that needs to be fixed. And this is something that's been worked at for a long time now from the African Union, and we haven't gotten any traction there. But I don't think this issue should be abandoned. We need to keep beating the drum on the issue of illicit financial flows because that's now going to crawl into the space of innovation and digital work, which African countries need to step up very quickly and begin to grasp policy ideas on how to not lose out on that market. We can

bring data to bear on the process as a development entity and try to query that space and get as much evidence as possible so that decision-making is evidence-based.

The second point or the third point relates to regulations. We're trying to advance the idea that governments should look at regulations as a stimulus. We've just come from COVID-19 impact, the small-medium enterprises are flattened completely, and they need to be stimulated. And instead of bringing in regulations that inspire a recovery of the sectors, we see sometimes regulations that stifle them further and some governments began to introduce some of these regulations as a sort of stimulus like revelations during COVID-19. It's important to take stock of what was done to release those companies to contribute to solving the COVID-19 problem and institute that make them systematic and institutional, as ways to regulate for stimulus rather than stifling.

Finally, I think we cannot deal with the issue of taxes without tackling the chronic situation of Africa's informality in terms of the economy, because these economies are not in the mainstream economy. They are not benefiting from the dividends of these taxes, but at the same time, governments aren't able to tap into that revenue sufficiently because up to 70% of the economy is informal. So that question of informality needs to be addressed.

Michael stated that in summary, the entire discussion was around closing the policy gap. And it was very clear from the discussions that there's a need to ensure that in creating these policies, they are co-created and that there are the best alliances between government and the private sector. It also was mentioned that ecosystem formation of these policies and co-creation of these policies, and engagement with government activity be encouraged and that is by lobbying, or by way of actually cross-breeding of ideas and cross-connections, through personnel interexchange. A new government architecture is something that must be looked into for there to be a public good, and the organizational structures of our governments must be looked into as well. He also mentioned that talking about taxation, taxing global

digital activities is significant so that Africa can get its fair share. More so, individuals playing in the African space in Africa must also know the regulations in order not to cross the lines with regulators. We need to bring data to bear on illicit financial flow, and get evidence to enable decision making by the government sector. And regulation should be looked more upon as an opportunity for stimulating the economy, rather than stifling innovation or stifling economic growth.

The session ended with Mark thanking everyone for their enthusiastic participation and also had all applaud the panelist. He announced the various workshops and where they will be held and finally wished all a happy lunchtime.

Breakout Sessions



UNIBASEL Workshop - Looking Outside Academia - The Challenge of convincing the Market (Ogun/ Nasarawa Hall)

Moderator:

Prof Theophile

Discussants:

- Dr. Norah Clarke, Program Director the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education at Universities South Africa (EDHE)
- Jordi Montserrat, Managing Partner VentureLab Sweden
- Simeon Osare

The SASBI Knowledge Group Meeting presented the University of Rwanda-Sweden Program and the Swiss Venture Kick Program that was established 10+ years ago at all Swiss universities. It offered room for comparison with its programs running and invited participants for fruitful exchange with the speakers and the start-up community at large.

Key Points as Discussed

- Professionals are being sought after to help write business plans for startups to access funds.
- Products/ projects are designed for small scale farmers by the University of Rwanda.
- Innovation of food safety mechanisms and models for farmers.
- Creation of the industry of sports.
- Partnership developments geared towards the implementation of certain projects.
- Certifications.
- Design of production processes for bananas.
- There are challenges with human resources.
- No harmonized practice when it comes to partnerships.
- There have been movements into the communities to find out citizens who are interested in getting ideas from students.
- Entrepreneurs are meeting the needs of the communities. These entrepreneurs consist of student innovators.
- Students are also trained to become entrepreneurs while in school.
- Students are also being trained to become innovators and there is access to the market as a result of collaborations.
- There are grants for student innovators, however, sometimes the outcome after giving grants to some student innovators cannot be predicted.
- There are a lot of uncertainties and one cannot guarantee that after supporting these students with grants, it will cause their chosen business to be a going concern.
- A lot of other people prefer to work for salaries.
- Stakeholders must take active roles in ensuring that student innovators succeed in their chosen fields of innovation. Beyond financial support, guidance, follow-up, mentoring and further training will help Visibility.
- Satisfying all the students is also a challenge but their leaders are learning from those considered to be ahead to solve this problem.



Workshop 2 – The New Dynamics and Perspectives in Diaspora Entrepreneurship: Plugging-in and Soft-Landing as ways forward NYETA Mali, Jokkolabs Mali and Jokkolabs Banjul. (Ogun/Nasarawa Hall)

Discussants:

- Poncelet O. Ileleji (Jokkolabs Banjul, Gambia)
- Angela Naa Afoley Odai (CIDO-AUC, Ethiopia)
- Aissata Tambadou (Bond’Innov, France)
- Jerry Osaghie (Afrezin Bank)
- Youssuf Simbo Diakite (Co – Chair ADYFE, Austria)

Key Points as Discussed

- There is a case of the work done by the working group on humanitarian actions that have produced a policy brief on the engagement of African organizations in humanitarian aid. This was done collectively and has very good quality. And it was published on the occasion of the International Day of international advocates. They offer international AIDS. It's a good example of collective work with an extremely effective outcome.
- A consortium was created to enable some of our members to apply for European funding. They were not selected. That's the reason why

I think it's very important to know what we mean by success because in that very case, even though they were not selected, the process was very important as it enabled them to work together and to get to know each other. It was very satisfactory that after the publication of the results, they said it's a pity you were not selected, but it was a pleasure to work together.

- The third and last example is DITA because he proved that we can also enable that sort of event, gathering so many people together. Just as a reminder, we provided some financial support, and when we see how the event is organized, so flawless then when we see that it brings together so many different actors, for us, it's a success.
- Collaboration and cooperation are what we must foster. This is how the right positive media narrative of Africa together withstands the outside world.
- Generally speaking, building a network, and ultimately, a community takes time, and dedication. And this is something that people have to keep in mind because a community or a network is a living organism that needs to be nurtured otherwise, they die.
- Ideas multiply when they are shared, and shared on platforms, or in networks of people with multi-disciplines and different backgrounds. So the more of us, the more we network, the more we exchange amongst ourselves, the better our ideas become. And that is what we need on the continent, to make sure that we are building systems that are cross border.
- Information on how to be more innovative is needed.
- Information on how to start up in other countries even if one is not a citizen by birth in such countries.
- Leveraging on the competencies of technology.
- SIDO intervenes to see how to foster the activities of good society actors within and outside the continent of Africa.

Discussion Session on Technology and Know-how Transfer

- The use or application of technology is such that cannot be ignored. However, there are limitations and the success of technology in Africa is not as much as we want at the moment. Of course, this is not to say there are no successes or success stories but just to say that there is so much more to be done.
- There has to be more collaboration in the areas of transfer of know-how to pass expertise forward and bridge the gap and as such more

success is assured.

- The place of training cannot be taken away.
 - Networking and collective approach to the transfer of know-how must continue.
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- There must be more investments in training.
 - At 16:20 GMT +1, the online session was closed due to the poor network connection for those online.
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 - People who were interested in owning diaspora SMEs were identified. These individuals gave a presentation of their business project ideas.



Workshop 3 – The Role of Corporates in an Innovation Ecosystem: Organised by Savannah Innovation Hub, Sudan Neo Hub and SyLabs (Niger/ Enugu Hall)

Discussants:

- Yousif Yahya, Founder Savanna Innovation Labs Sudan
- Abdellah Mallek, Founder and Manager SyLabs Algeria
- Zindzi Montshwari Letsididi, Founder and Director The NeoHub Innovation Lab Botswana.

Key Points as Discussed

- Collaboration and support for startups
- Partnerships with the ecosystem
- Finding unique ways to work with the ecosystem and not bent on working against them.
- Open up spaces for the ecosystem to come in and work hand in hand with corporates.
- Strategic positioning to enhance the easy flow of work across the board.
- Entrepreneurs have a role to play in having corporates adjust their corporate social responsibility.
- Corporate social responsibility is to be fostered the most.
- Entrepreneurs want to journey with corporates and need corporates to open up more.
- Corporates need to build sustainable funding models.
- Beyond the grants, corporates would like to be more involved in the details of innovators and entrepreneurs. This will give a deeper understanding of the work innovators are doing and will foster more support.
- Corporates should work on models that not only allow for financial support to innovators but also give innovators the opportunity for long-term collaborations.
- Proper legal frameworks should be provided for startups, innovations as well as policies that govern the activities of these startups.
- Poverty and unemployment are on the rise and Africa needs more for her to engage and develop more innovators.
- Businesses must have a continuity structure that corporates can easily see to be sure that these businesses will continue to exist and thrive when the founders are no longer there. This assures corporates that their collaborations, funding and support are not wasted.
- Insurance policies must be in place as it also helps to ensure business continuity.

Workshop 3 – Creating National Networks Organised by ASSEK, GHN, ISN and KmerTech (Benue/ Plateau Hall)

Discussants:

- Robert Karanja - Chairman ASSEK
- Steve Tchoumba - Managing Director ActivSpaces
- Josiah Kwesi - Co-founder iSpaces
- Nneka Ukey - Executive Secretary ISN

Key Points as Discussed

- ASSEK refused to bend to the usual and as a result, they got a seat at the table to deliberate with the government. They discovered that the government does not move nor operate at the speed of business. Because of this, the data project they embarked on has never taken off and it's been over 3 years since it was initiated.
- There is no sense of urgency in the government.
- We must find ways to continue to sensitive the government and other stakeholders on the needful.
- Corruption has eaten deep into our systems and we must fight back. One of the ways to do so is to educate people on the effects of corruption both on the economy and the individual.
- ASSEK and other hubs have tried to come together to liaise with the government to ensure that the right things are done and it's been a tough one but they are still working and are ready to do what it takes to conquer.
- There must be a structure beyond passion to sustain the work.
- There must be ownership and leadership in every single work we do.
- There must be a dream and an organizational plan.
- There must be a "Why" and all activities must be geared towards the "Why".
- In Cameroon, we took the work and didn't care if anyone saw us or not. We just wanted to work and solve the problems we saw.
- In building national networks, think about who can be the engine driving the work and put that person there, the leader doesn't necessarily have to be the engine.

- Put structure in place early enough.
- The networks formed are to deal with issues in the countries they reside but it was noted that these networks are not absolutely independent of AfriLabs nor are the networks a competition to AfriLabs.
- These networks must state and answer the following; Who, What, Why, Where and possibly how?

Leaders were nominated who will collate email addresses of those present at the workshop for an online continuation of the workshop where there will be presentations and further work can be done with support where possible.



Workshop 4- Supporting Startups to scale across Africa Organised by Innovation Growth Hub Nigeria and Flat6Labs Tunisia

This session was mainly on the support and support systems that should be in place channelled towards assisting startups to survive, succeed, thrive and scale across Africa. It was also established that this support is of great relevance as the life of startups are highly dependent on

support.

Support such as grants, collaborations, training, and so on must be in place.

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The Moderator introduced the topic by stating that the purpose of the workshop was to ensure that hubs/Startups can follow a model that can help them scale automatically and how to leverage all to ensure that scaling across Africa is possible.

Daniel asked Mara about the challenges she has experienced in scaling across Tunisia and other African countries. Mara stated the following:

1. You need to understand the competition
2. Know where and when to extend
3. Funding
4. Know your target market
5. Finding the right Partner in that country (All about networking)
6. Creating soft-landing programs (by sending an entrepreneur to another country to meet different people)

Mara further stated that there is no universal definition of scaling.

With this, Daniel asked Kola a question.

At what point is a startup ready to scale and what does scaling mean?

A startup can scale from day 1 if you're software-laden like Bolt. It depends on the product and the founding team. It is important to invest in infrastructure for scale. It is beneficial as those organizations help Startups to Scale across Africa as Afrilab does. There is a need in helping them settle business development and aid in building infrastructure in Africa and multiple countries.

Daniel asked Moataz about the things limiting African scale from spreading across African countries.

His response was:

1. You have to go across other countries to seek funds and other entrepreneurs try to copy each other. There was a disconnect from the reality of entrepreneurship.

2. There should be an opportunity to learn from other African countries as well as their mistakes.

3. We need to trust each other. Therefore, we need to build trust.

Mahab agreed with all Moataz said because it also occurred in Tunisia. Either think outside your continent or think of how to upgrade and develop your startup.

A participant suggested that rather than building units for Startups, work with the units of corporate. This will help scale across Africa.

Kola Aina asked why Africans keep limiting themselves to Africa, rather than scaling globally. We should ensure that the products built are globally competitive.

A participant added that we are eating up foreign content and the Westerners have the infrastructure to scale wide.

A participant agreed with Kola Aina because it helps broaden the horizon of our knowledge.

Daniel added that the discussion won't end here but the group will monitor and share their growth after what they take off from the workshop.

Payday Africa was an example stated by Kola Aina. More companies created for the world were created for Africa, so it's best to level up the competition.

A participant suggested that this shouldn't be limited to technology. Let everyone focus on other ideas like agriculture, etc. We should leverage our strength in our community by building a platform, identifying the pinpoint.

A link was created for people interested in scaling out (bit.ly/scaleafrica21)

Mara said we focus on tech because it is easy to scale compared to other kinds of startups. You can optimize your value chain because you have access to a different market. The most important thing is networking.

A participant said that going global makes more sense than investing, which is why it is important to scale internationally.

1. Limited access market area: Kola said he tries to create a connection within their portfolio. Think of a portfolio as a community.

2. There is scouting in different markets as well.

The challenge with agricultural products is the quality standard for export. It is best to raise the quality of the product before scaling.

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Participants suggested that it is best to inform new startups that it is possible to scale up from day one and how they can follow the formats to keep growing. The way to scale into other countries differ. How do we enable businesses to work on this? Kola responded that AfriLabs will make a way for the scaling process to be less difficult. The problem is not solved automatically. Nobody is testing the rules to see which works or not.

Daniel said he will find a way for scaling to be made easier across Africa by startups. It is not about the geography but your target market (culture, etc.). After identifying the target market, you think about the geography.

How will AfriLabs do this scaling across the continent?

Moataz explained that the process is to support IOT and startups across Africa. The aim is to have labs where startups can connect to ease the scaling process, like the scale between Africa and Europe. There is an accelerator program and it's all-encompassing. It is a three-year-long program.

There should be ways to strengthen entrepreneurs within the Hub. It is not just for the Hub but to leverage AfriLabs' purpose for the other communities.

Women as Innovation Leaders; Designing the Future of Female Investment Organized by the Women of AfriLabs

Discussants:

- Feishi- North-East Humanitarian Innovation Hub
- Rhonda – Women in Entrepreneurship & Technology (The First Innovation Center dedicated to women Entrepreneurship in Cameroon.
- Sandra – Founder Hardcore
- Gloria – Head, Programs on Innovation and Impact Hub Lagos
- FayaWilliams – Founder Exponential Hub (A Business development

hub in the space of employability skills, professional skills training, partner to development agencies, certified to deliver international labour organization with a vision to serve women especially and other youths across Africa.

- Teritambo – Coordinator of Research Activity at the Pan African University of African Union in Nigeria.
- Sophie Jalo – Senegal Entrepreneurship Delegation

The discussion was centered on the points below;

- How women within the agencies that work with communities manage to go about doing their work and can bring their best selves to the workplace.
- The challenges that these women have experienced and addressed.
- The outcome of the discussion will form the theme that will be handed over to more women joining the network that can support them and also ensure that they know they have the support of other women.
- Question: If you could wake up with a skill that you didn't have the night before, what do you wish it could be? Answers: Understanding tech better, being able to learn new languages fast, and networking.
- Women must continue to improve themselves and be up to date with all that is needed for their work. This will keep them relevant in the ecosystem and beyond.
- Women must also look out for opportunities within and outside the ecosystem. Such opportunities will take them to levels beyond what they can ordinarily reach by themselves. During networking, many of such opportunities can be discovered just from conversations.
- Women must learn and strive to evolve. No one should end up the same way they started. There are a lot in women that are yet to be discovered and women must do what it takes to discover the strengths within and work them out to become more.
- Women must learn to face their fears with the work they do and such other fears that keep them in the background and not allow them to develop. Women must strive to become who they desire to be irrespective of these fears or obstacles.

- Learning and applying the right attitude towards people and work is of great necessity and achieving this will place women in a better position to become leaders.
- Women must see themselves as a voice and an instrument needed to rewrite the narrative and bring about the required change.
- Understanding emotional intelligence will help women work better with people and help them become better leaders as well.
- As African women, understanding the different perspectives, cultures, and how people think and act across different African countries will broaden the scope of women and will always position women better for innovation and leadership. Breaking cultural barriers will make it easier for women to introduce technology to these people from different parts of Africa.
- The study of psychology will also be of great benefit to African women in the ecosystem.
- Artificial intelligence is highly achievable if women put their minds to it.
- Women must learn to read and listen. Listening is of great essence.
- People management is of great importance to women as well as talent management and emotional intelligence.
- In Senegal, opportunities are being created for women to access high technology, technical and financial support as well as leverage empowerment.
- A directory will be created for new women being added into the community so that other women can see and support them.
- Women must decide who they want to be and hold on to their decision.
- As hub managers, what are we offering? What is in our communities? What is our area of focus? We must answer these questions to be able to create an impact.
- We must pay attention to our teams. They can make us or mar our work. If our teams are strong then the strength they exude will reflect in the entire ecosystem.
- Women must learn empathy and help to build and raise others.

- Good communication is key and your team must be trained to master good communication.
- Understand your environment and know how to function effectively and efficiently there.
- Replicate yourself by spending time impacting others.
- Women must learn to support those under them to make them become better women.
- As a woman, take care of yourself and it transcends to women around you.
- Have a vision and a mission and pursue with passion and also carry those around and those working with you along.
- Women must avoid unhealthy self-comparisons and unhealthy competitions. Women must learn to complement each other and not become competitors.
- Women should strive to be happy from within and be content with where and what they have while continuously striving to become better. Women must pursue their visions joyfully and not benchmark themselves against others.
- Women must look at their strengths and give these to the market.
- Learn to work with volunteers who are not paid but also recommend them for greater opportunities.
- Pay attention to your health as a woman. Be concerned about what you eat and drink. Coffee is great, vegetables also. Good nutrition is good for women.
- Time management is extremely important for women.



Parallel Session on The Nigeria Startup Bill: A Model for Effective Government-Startup Collaboration.

Moderator:

Kenechukwu Chukwu, Member services Manager.

Panelists:

- Adaeze Shukan, Country Director for UK/ Nigeria TechHub.
- Osward Osaretin Guobadia, Senior Special Assistant to the Nigerian President on Digital Transformation the Lead for the Nigerian Startup Bill.
- Kassim, Head of Legal and Compliance, Smile Identity.
- Nkechi Oguchi, CEO Ventures Park.

Question:

To Osward

Looking at Nigeria over the past 5 years, how applicable has government startup collaboration as a model been effective and efficient?

Answer:

Osward

Over the years there has been a misalignment between what the regulations want and what the innovative bodies want to do and that's one of the reasons the Nigerian startup bill is being

developed to provide a platform for both parties to meet to help create the much desired innovative environment with regulations for efficiency. However, over the last 5 years, there have been mismatch situations where value creators and regulations that miss the mark or the actual innovators were operating in the dark regarding what the actual regulations were. Hence to bridge the gap, the idea of the startup bill is to bring both parties to the table.

Nkechi added that there has been a lot of engagement and activities with the government and to that effect, the Vice President of Nigeria visited her hub. However, the changes have been championed more by the ecosystem sometimes through social media to sensitize the government on issues and resolutions needed. She said there is a willingness from the government to engage. An ecosystem dialogue series has been developed to enable the government and startup founders to get together and understand each other thereby innovators understanding policies and regulations and vice versa. She added that dialogue with the government must happen faster but then the challenge is with the government taking actions that will positively affect the grassroots as the feedback from the grassroots have been negative, hence dialogue should translate to positive actions.

Question:

How can the government leverage solutions from startups to function more efficiently?

Answer:

by Kassim

The government unfortunately did and does not contemplate working with startups and innovators foundationally on the documents and legal framework that holds the government together. For the government, I.C.T is seen as some secretariat with computers for sending mails and where you leave files. There is a misalignment between what the ecosystem is saying and how the government is designed.

From the government approach, more work needs to be done to deal with the fundamental elements and that's why the startup

bill is exemplary because it allows forming the right policies. Adaeze added that the government and ecosystem need to see the startup ecosystem as a business contract or a partnership because it's always a win-win in a partnership agreement. In other thriving economies, it is such kind of agreement and trust that got them the desired result.

Look at Silicon Valley, Rwanda health issues, Senegal during covid-19. The Government wants a better economy innovation, protection of consumers, startups to deliver services and build a sustainable business. If such agreement between both parties is reached then trust is built and also a foundation for a thriving economy is built.

Question:

What values should startups look for in government startup collaboration and what are startups willing to give in return?

Answer

- Government creating an enabling environment for business. Regulatory frameworks should understand the context of these businesses.
- While the government is in search of partners to deliver on contracts, the government should create systems and criteria that make it easy for startups to qualify.
- There should be a support plan for startups in every sector.
- Startups in return should strive to generate revenue for the government through taxes. Nigeria depends so much on oil however ICT generates revenue for governments too.
- Startups can solve some issues of the economy like food and financial issues. Such solutions will improve the well-being of the nation.

Question:

To Oswald;

In the long term, the ease of doing business in Nigeria is projected to trend around 133 in 2021 and 135 in 2022 according to trade economies. How can an effective government startup collaboration address this challenge?

Answer

Oswald

The tech ecosystem has 2 sides to it. One being the practitioners and two, being the regulators and policymakers coming together and creating an enabling environment. Both sides should continue to educate each other on the requirements to create this environment. When the state supports the startups, the startups must give back to the state. The question, he said, speaks specifically to the services. In the bill, there is an attempt to make services that make doing business in Nigeria a lot more attractive and that comes from the understanding of what the business requires to succeed, survive and thrive. The bill has a startup management system that gives a platform for any startup to plugin and when the startup qualifies, it has access to a great deal of information, agencies, grants etc. The bill aims to bulldoze through these challenges and then make Nigeria a "GO-To" location for startups.

Question:

To Adaeze

How best can government and startups work together to create a thriving economy?

Answer

- Trust must be built by and from both parties.
- The Big Tent Approach. Collaboration between every key stakeholder. This approach is a model for policy formulation and implementation and so this approach should be replicated.

Question:

To Kassim

Do you perceive any upside in better collaboration between government and startups based on the startup bill?

Answer

There is. It's hard to see the downside. Sure there are concerns about accountability by startups, fear of inexperience etc. How do we review this idea?

- Rework some aspects of the law. Create aspects of contractual comfort.
- Education of the government about what the ecosystem community is about.

Question:

To Oswald

Will the government get to a point where there is a change of mindset?

Answer

Yes. But it ultimately depends on the decisions made today.

Question:

To Nkechi

How can startups be better sensitized on a better understanding that the government cannot be isolated from the ecosystem?

Answer

Sensitization is already on as founders are realizing the need to start engaging with the government because the environment is hostile to them and also are the regulations. Take the "Gokada" for instance, after all the work put in, everything went down the way it did.

How to engage is the problem. Most founders choose to start behind the curtains and then come out to engage when they are big enough. They believe that the government should look for them and not them going to the government. The good thing is, a lot of startups have grown and are engaging with the government. There will be more engagements from startups that are big.

Adaeze said both partners must be open to each other knowing

they are both championing the same objectives of regulation which is to promote innovation and economic growth, development and to protect the rights of the father. Supporting business associations and lobby groups that understand startup and government.

Questions from the Audience

After the startup bill has been passed, will there still be equality between the government and the startups?

Answer

Kassim

There must be a gathering of stakeholders where the kind of instruments issued with regards to these subjects can be questioned and deliberated on. That way the problem is half solved. The bill also says if you pass a regulation without engaging the council as it affects startups, it is effectively illegal so it can be reversed. The substance of the bill states a lot that must be harnessed.

Osward added that there is a plan to template the bill in states based on the unique requirements in the states.

Question

George

Will this bill be more advisory or executional?

Answer

Kassim

Yes, the bill has an advisory role but it also has clear positions.

Lastly, Nkechi said we all must be optimistic. Osward added that we must support the bill and push its objectives. We must collaborate.

Adaeze also said optimism is key and we must realize that we all need the government. Kassim concluded by saying Optimism, hope, and determination.

Day 2

(28th October 2021)

The 2021 AfriLabs Annual Gathering, Day 2 started with an opening speech by Ajibola Odukoya, Chief Operating Officer, AfriLabs. He stated that hubs older than 10 years will have their presentation videos played for 15 mins, these hubs were: Winnovation Hub Nigeria, RLabs SouthAfrica, HiveColab Uganda, ActivSpaces Cameroon and BongoHive Zambia



Exits & Unicorns: A New Era for Investing in Africa Organised by AfriLabs and TechCabal.

Lightning Talks by 4 African startups of stages Series A and Exits, and a panel discussion with startups, investors and innovation hubs with investment funds.

Moderator:

- Mara Michelo Zhanet , Founder of Jacaranda hub, Zambia

Panelists:

- Rebecca Enonchong, AfriLabs Board Chair 2017 - 2021
- Tomi Davies, President African Business Angel Network (ABAN)
- Kola Aina, General Partner, Ventures Platform Fund Nigeria.
- Phares Kariuki, CEO Pure Infrastructure Limited Kenya (Virtual)

The questions to consider are;

- Are we doing enough?
- What type of funding are we looking for?
- What type of investment are we looking for?
- What does the future look like for Africa's ecosystem to grow?
- For Rebecca, looking at old startups, what does the African landscape look like now? In the beginning, funding was gotten from charity

but right now, we aren't seen as a charity case. How do we increase local investment? That is a vital question we need to ask.

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- For Kola, investing in startups requires local participation as much as foreign investments. Looking at years back, Kola indicates that we really didn't have investors in Africa but right now, a lot of the work that hubs have put in is starting to materialize. The real opportunity in Africa is a pan-Africa opportunity. Zambia and Egypt are coming up with amazing companies.
- What does an enabling environment look like, so we can get more unicorns in other parts of Africa; The panelist said we need to understand what policies are in place first because it could make or mar the industry, and also partnerships are very important because they are enablers in unicorn companies. Furthermore, the processes in place by the present unicorn should be studied to yield growth. The hubs need to read the market so that when they are investor-ready, they will be ready to grow faster.
- What are the most lucrative areas of investment now; the panelist made it clear that first of all, we need to state the difference between unicorn and liquidity. So irrespective of what aspect of tech you are doing, they are all relevant. Investors are looking for returns so once the team can deliver, investors will come.
- What are the challenges that are limiting startups? Rebecca thinks that English-speaking startups tend to get more capital because most investors do not want to go through the huddles of learning the language before they can invest. The issue with some French-speaking African countries is the rigorous processes that end up making difference in the success of the business.
- The panel discussion lasted for over an hour and ended with advice for startups to address evaluation and figure out their value because investors want value in exchange for their money.

WORKSHOP 1 – DIGITAL CITIES AND NEW TYPES OF SERVICE JOBS: CAN TECH HELP WORKERS GO DIGITAL?

DIGITAL CITIES AND NEW TYPES OF SERVICES JOBS

Research is presently conducted for opportunities created by digitalization in partnering countries based on that, scenarios will be developed by stakeholders and based on the scenarios, recommendations will be developed in exchange for the National policy dialogue.

On the regional level;

- Pure exchange is being fostered and links are collected with practical observers from other countries in the region.

On an international level;

- Results from partner countries are brought to the international dialogue on the future of work in cooperation with international bodies like the World Bank.

The focus is on the exchange and experience from hubs and innovators on the future of work and Elvis will kick off the discussion.

The work in Rwanda focuses on what the future of work will be in the next 8 years. Africa is urbanizing.

Q; Do you think hubs will support people who are not digital entrepreneurs?

The focus is on entrepreneurs and less on digital.

N/B; hubs are there to create innovation which in its ripple effect creates jobs.

This is an interactive section.

- The first speaker was Benson who is a community manager in a center that gives a \$20,000 grant to a media startup. Benson said that they produce local magazines and they don't see themselves as digital. He thinks that digital-first doesn't work for them.
- Kelvin who is the founder of an artificial intelligence hub in Warri, Nigeria helps local women leverage local intelligence to aid their businesses. For him, emphasis is on working smart and not hard. And also a center was created for youth to learn more about tech.
- A lady from Kenya who runs an educational and technology hub runs a program called digital apprenticeship - work with young tech professionals. She provides mentorship for young tech professionals just so they can support digital transformation in businesses. In the long run, these young professionals are retained by business owners thereby creating jobs.
- Tunde from muster point thinks that capacity is needed for digitalization even in rural areas because going digital increases efficiency. He thinks that other problems like power and infrastructure can be solved and digitalization cannot be overemphasized.
- Another contributor talks about the 4 pillars that make up a digital economy which are digital currency, digital infrastructure, digital rules and digital networks. He thinks that the knowledge gap is a major issue in Africa and thinks that schools and markets still practice the traditional economy. The structures are lacking in Africa and a big question is how do we create structures that will change the pattern from traditional to digital economy?.
- Favor who leads an incubation hub in the southern part of Nigeria brings the concern that surprisingly people in Onitsha still prefer the traditional economy. He thinks that value orientation first is necessary to change the mindset of the traders.

Q; Can tech hubs help workers go digital?

- Mara from Zambia says we keep treating the digital economy like a standalone meanwhile it is an enabling tool. She talked about how the digital economy begins with the mindset that naïve people with a hundred computers will equal to nothing.

- People willing to learn how to use the digital economy and make it a daily use tool are essentially people who do not want to do the work and therefore a chunk of the responsibilities lies with the government to ensure that people start using the tools from nursery school.
- Herbert from Nigeria shares his view stating that a lot of youth do not have the digital skills beyond posting on social media platforms. He also cited some directors in the public service who do not know how to send emails and use Microsoft office skills because it is assumed that executive assistants will handle that.
- Yusufu from technology for social change added that in the last month her NGO has been trying to work with people who need these digital skills and when advertisements are placed people do not respond to them because they are more concerned about how to feed and afford transportation to the venue of these said training.

Providing these skills is a good thing but measures should be put in place to deal with limitations and concerns aired by these people.

WORKSHOP 1.2 Collaborative Innovation Approaches and Toolkit, Unlikely Yet Promising Allies – How to Leverage Hubs in Bringing Start-ups and Policymakers Together?



BY CHRISTIAN AND TIMO ON COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION

Christian starts by defining collaborative innovation and gives reasons why people should work with public sectors.

The goal for the innovation is to have a trial approach and try to adapt

it to what the government needs. Public sectors being absorbed into the system will help the value of it. Toolkits are developed to help hubs and they can be adapted to use in organizing workshops.

64 The guide for the startup is very important and should be gotten because the hubs are the bridges between the startups and the public sector.

- Organizing ecosystem tours
- Making pitch nights
- Organizing design thinking workshops are ways to start getting in touch with the public sector.

Most participants think that working with the public sector is usually difficult because of the limitations provided by civil servants that will not want to change the old ways of doing things. A common way to handle this is to help the government identify innovation needs that members of the hub can cater to. These limitations also enable the hub to learn how to work with the government better.

Q; What happens to hubs based where partnerships can not be easily accessible because of location?.

Christian stated that more potential can be located in the local public sector too.

- Diaz from Senegal shared experiences about how the collaboration started as a means of encouraging other participants to understand that mistrust was a limitation.
- Another participant stated that approaching the government as though they owe you the responsibility of doing what you want when you want could create a rift in the relationship. Government should be treated as clients with the utmost respect and a positive mindset.
- Ahmed runs a hub that is now just gaining the attention of the government and his worry is how to engage the government more and is hopeful that the collaborative toolkit will help him achieve that.



The Pan-EU Africa Sustainable Network of Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) Fostering Smart Logistics Solutions. Organized by EU-Africa DIGILOGIC, an H2020 project, funded by the European Commission.

Thorsten Hulsmann, CEO Digital Hub Logistics, Germany, Digilogic Coordinator (Virtual) stated that digital logic will overall show the challenges or what logistics challenges are. She said that in the next year, it will be open to innovators who are men, women, and actually to everybody, both from Europe and from Africa. She continued by asking, how can they innovate from those who have never been to places like Kigali and so on? What is the pain point that will be solved with innovation? and she said solving such problems is also what they are trying to do. She said the channels will be open, but most likely in a couple of months and all the information will be there. They'll have workshops to explain what the challenge is about. She added that they are trying to involve the government industries, SMEs, to come up with real challenges that are relevant to the market and that are relevant to the government. Why? Because they go to the innovators that they will select, to have a chance to move forward and scale up and also have real traction into the market. She also said this is an invitation to the speakers that are connected across the ecosystem to bring up the subject. Four winners will then be selected. These winners will follow a membership burger with Dorfman from Nottingham Germany. They'll be working closely with Thorsten and with the VTT which is a research centre in the Philippines, the major one in Europe so they can get some affiliation. There will be coaching.

Additionally, everyone was warmly invited to the community and encouraged to sign up. It was said that there are lots of exchange facilities via the homepage of digilogic for Africa. There are contact areas as well. Also, anyone who gets in can find the community space and sign in. There will be a guide to take those who sign up through the challenges but also into the network area where they want to bring signees together with interesting experts, people or entrepreneurs.

Thorsten thanked AfriLabs for hosting Digilogic and mentioned that they have a roll-up with a QR code which when scanned will take you straight away into the digilogic website.

A speaker from Senegal took over and started speaking about promoting entrepreneurship in Senegal and the plan to have a project grouping logistic companies together afterwards. However, the meeting came to an end as there was an internet network challenge.



Workshop 5: Exploring opportunities for improved citizens engagement through digital by GIZ-AU.

Anchored by Ibraheem Sanusi.

Panellists;

1. Lehle Balde
2. Samson Itodo - Executive Director Yiaga Africa.

Question 1 to Samson Itodo

How to re-emerge technology in Africa and the place of governance?

Answer

Samson said the conversation is being carried out because something is fundamentally wrong and this is the fracture in the relationship between the state and society. There are declining levels of trust as citizens don't trust the state and in response, the state uses its coercive power to clamp down on citizens. Trust levels in the public space have been declining in the last two decades despite the access to the use of technology. This is either because both the state and citizens are not doing something right or there is a determination of both actors to not embrace the new (technology). Democracy has failed to deliver its promise and development to the people. Technology can bridge the gap if those in the tech industry and those in the civil society space have a shared understanding of what the common good is and that common good has to be one that advances the pursuit of happiness and has to be the greater good of the greater number of citizens. One challenge of our generation is that our standards have become so low that even when the government performs the basic responsibility of providing the little services that they are voted into power to provide we sing praises out of proportion and this has to stop while we redefine our concept of governance and development. Also, both the tech industry and civil services players need to have a shared understanding of the institutional arrangement and frameworks that govern the two actors.

Question 2 to Lehle

The use of technology by the citizens.

Answer

Citizens can be journalists and they can help shape a country. Although fake news is also a problem as a result of technology.

Question 3

What is the common ground or understanding?

Answer

When there is a diversity of language, there can't necessarily be a common ground.

There should be a bargain between the governance and the populace.

The issue between restrictions and regulations is continuously brought up when it comes to the media. This area should be critically looked at.

In many countries, the government has a large power in the procurement of startups. The government should be worked with and not seen as the enemy.

Question 4 to Samson

How do we make the government interested in technology?

Answer

When technology helps the government and the citizens, it adds value to both parties. The government needs to see the economic value that technology brings which will in turn allow them to engage technology.

Question 5 to Lehle

How do we help those make money and ensure public service?

Answer

You can do good and make a profit at the same time.

Not everybody has access to technology, the internet, and electricity.

There are 53.3% of people that do not have access to the tools.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Why is the government hesitant against technology? For example, If the government decides to digitalize technology in Kenya it may lead to political issues. Technology can bring transparency which the government may not be ready for.

There is a misunderstanding from both ends, that's the government and its citizens. When most people think about technology it is seen as a storm. Technology is just a tool that can be fully maximized.

In social media, Africa is seen as glamorous but the reality is that the countries have poor infrastructure and the citizens are still waiting on the government.

We cannot innovate in a vacuum as Africans. As much as we want to make a profit, these technologies must reflect reality.

Most times, social media is portrayed more than reality and the government may lose interest because they are considering development and infrastructure.

What the government is interested in is how this technology is translated to profit.

Startups should start thinking about the economic value when the government is engaged.

Which include;

- Electoral value
- Infrastructure

Question *to the panelists from the participants.*

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Since e-commerce is transforming the financial industry, is there any country in Africa that gives access to the citizens?

Answer - *Lehle*

Rwanda is one of such countries that gives access to its citizens. The disconnect could be as a result of the generation gap between the government and startups.

CONTRIBUTION

The startups can help the government understand by the way they portray and present information.

How do we spread knowledge of technology?

Media which is the fourth estate should be utilized.

GENERAL SESSION (NOON)



First Speaker:

Mr Chibueze Josh Izugbo - Founder & CEO Ebeosi

Ebeosi Limited (a member of Ebeosi Inc. USA) is an e-commerce marketplace that serves as a connection between buyers and sellers of products in Nigeria and a host of other countries including the USA, UK, Germany, Poland, South Korea, France, Italy etc.

Its unique value proposition is to champion the shopping experience for buyers who want to shop based on the country of origin of the products as well as the conditions under which the products are made and who made them.

Mr Chibueze speaking about the e-commerce marketplace acknowledges the fact that a lot has been spoken about;

- Global supply chain
- The problem that Africa has is the fact that over 80 percent of our country's needs are imported.

According to him, if China and a few countries we rely on for imports go on complete lockdown, Africa might just lose a whole lot.

What we make in Africa can serve the entire globe but we rather import. We do well in terms of basic resources but surprisingly, we are not the ones developing those products.

Chibueze went ahead to advertise Ebeosi to everyone present. He called on everyone to come on board considering the fact that their marketplace presents whereby your search can be tailored to suit a

particular audience like; female clothes, African wears, etc.

According to him, Ebeosi has developed a master plan to redefine how shopping is done from brand-centric to origin-centric. This means that instead of shopping for products using its brand, one can shop for the same product using its origin (i.e the country where the product is made).

Ebeosi has also developed a system that allows for the shopping of products developed, made or owned by women by filtering such products using women. He also said that knowing that people are very concerned about the environment, Ebeosi has also created a platform that enables the shopping of eco-friendly products.

He also added that Ebeosi has been able to achieve diversification of the global supply chain which allows inclusivity of both majority and minority which he said is the best way to include Africa into the global supply chain.

He ended his presentation by thanking AfriLabs for surviving 10 years in Africa and encouraging the audience to be the change they desire to see.

Chair-Elect and Executive Director AfriLabs were then ushered onto the stage where they started by thanking GIZ. He also stated that AfriLabs is 10 and we are currently in 51 countries across Africa.

The next speaker Marc Huemmer, Policy Advisor GIZ will be doing a presentation on the **Africa European digital innovation bridge – An opportunity for a trans-continental network of innovation leaders by the policy adviser for GIZ**

The speaker Marc Huemmer, Policy Advisor GIZ acknowledges the fact that the pandemic has shown us how interconnected we are as humans. For digital innovation to occur, we need thriving and functioning ecosystems. These Ecosystems can be harnessed to suit us and achieve many purposes.

A project has been launched to achieve this functioning ecosystem and as part of the project, a digital invasion hub will be tried out.

LAUNCH OF CATALYTIC AFRICA



Catalytic Africa is referred to as the tool that will support startups across Africa. It is meant to create value.

Objectives of catalytic Africa;

It is a matching fund between angel investors and hubs under AfriLabs.

It is looking to encourage hubs in other countries with very slim chances.

Catalytic Africa is a grant that goes into the startup as a non-equity grant.

Launch of the AfriLabs–Briter Bridges Ecosystem Report

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- Dairo Gulliana, Founder and Director of Briter Bridges
- Anna Ekeledo, Executive Director AfriLabs

In this session, the success of AfriLabs over the past 10 years was discussed and also the way forward.

Norebase - Tola Onayemi



Tola started by requesting that the Norebase website be projected. He said that on the site, the audience would see those who are either funders, hub owners or angel investors and if these persons have ever done business across the continent of Africa they would find out that being able to grow fast has become ridiculously important. Tola said he helped in the negotiation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. According to him, with the agreement, there was a creation of an infrastructure for businesses to scale across the continent but the infrastructure needed to get across the African market doesn't exist. He added that a lot of business owners reach out to him with the quest to reach the African market and this is because there is almost no one who can scale a hyper-successful business in one African country because of the issue of disposable income and lots more. He also said that getting into the market has become difficult because of the changing and unpredictable rules and issues of different regulations.

Tola said to solve this problem, Norebase as a single digital infrastructure/platform helps to start a company, get a bank account, register patents, trademarks and also carry out tax registration in any African country to help such businesses scale in any African country. He said this makes Africa accessible to such businesses.

For AfriLabs and hub owners, Norebase gives an opportunity to direct business to it and get rebates and also get discounts for people who come through them but more importantly can be

registered to be a registered mailing address for Norebase and get paid for that.

He added that Norebase is not only helping businesses and people get across the continent, it is also building the single digital rails for Pan-African expansion. This also includes the building of a single API that allows anti-laundersing money compliance in every African country. This he said will be announced in a few months.

Tola said that this is the future and invited everyone to join on the journey to make Africa a single market. He said anyone could reach him via tola@norebase.com



AfriLabs Board Fireside Chat; Looking Ahead New Board Elect

New Board Elect

In this session, members of the new board were introduced and all spoke about the plans and strategies to move AfriLabs from where it is to the desired future. Each member spoke passionately about the desire to see certain growth within the ecosystem and as well have a great impact on the hubs and Africa at large.

Anna Ekeledo, Executive Director AfriLabs gave a vote of thanks to everyone for participating and making the 2021 AfriLabs Annual Gathering a huge success.

Mark Dodsworth brought the ceremony to a close leading the entire AfriLabs members in a nostalgic celebration playing the drums and other instruments.

