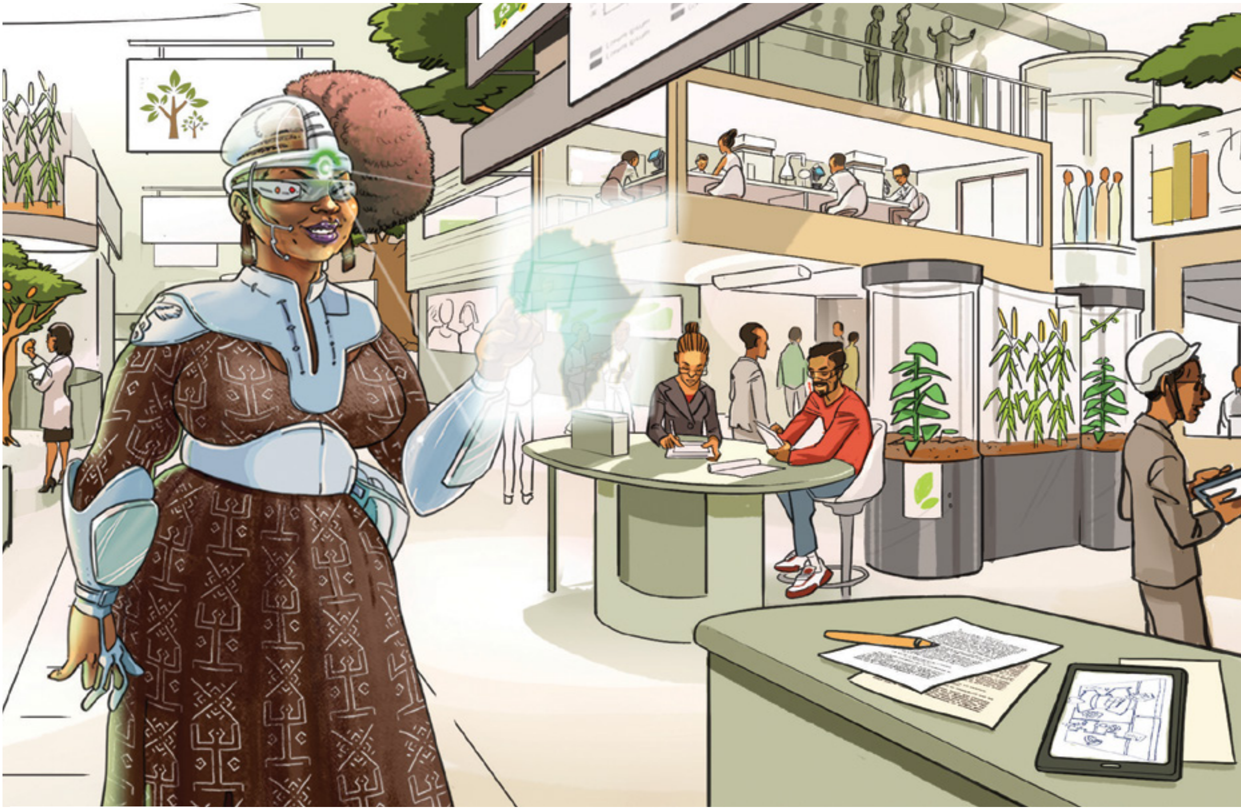
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF INCUBATORS IN WEST AFRICA

A guide to understanding support structures for entrepreneurs in West Africa



ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE la francophonie

AGENCE ITALIENNE POUR LA COOPÉRATION AU DÉVELOPPEMENT

Afric'innov

BOND'INNOV

THE TONY ELUMELU FOUNDATION

This Guide is a co-production of Afric'innov's steering committee, coordinated by Ninon Duval, Claire Crochemore and Alexandre Laure, written by Elodie Hanff and Christian Jekinnou, with the support of Samir Abdelkrim, Simon Duchatelet, Jimmy Berthe, Niamh O'Sullivan and Halimatou Nimaga.

This effort would not have been possible without the participation and assistance of the managers of entrepreneurship supporting institutions, entrepreneurs and investors who have agreed to share their experiences in this guide, and more specifically the Tony Elumelu Foundation and the GSMA.

Report available in English and French on www.africinnov.com.

The cover of the guide "Challenges" and opportunities of incubators in West Africa» was designed by Amandine Wadre Puntous and illustrates the character of Dada. Symbol of incubation and a dedicated trainer, Dada supports young African talents in the development of their innovative business projects. Her centuries-old knowledge combines knowledge of traditional remedies with the advanced technology via its hologram or high-tech medi-kit.

She is one of the characters in the comic strip of the Tubaniso Agrobusiness & Innovation Center project (TAIC). The TAIC, based in Bamako (Mali), aims to become a real regional innovation hub built on 100 hectares dedicated to disruptive innovations in the agricultural sector for the Sahel.

SUMMARY

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
AFNOR	French Agency for Standardization
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	German Development Agency
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MSMES	Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OIF	International Organization of la Francophonie
OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SMI	Small and Medium Industries
WAEMU	West-African Economic and Monetary Union
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

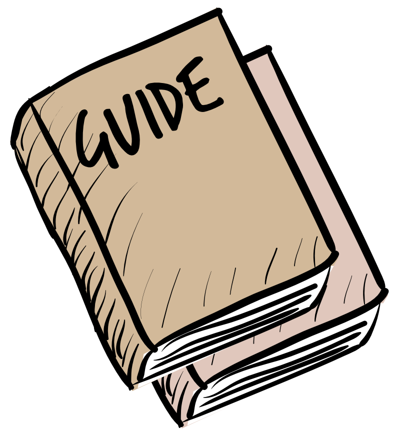
PREAMBLE

This report is:

- An educational tool to understand entrepreneurship support structures' mission and take stock of where they are.
- A practical guide for any actor involved in entrepreneurship and innovation issues in West Africa, who wants to learn about the opportunities associated with the emergence of "incubator-type" structures. It should be noted that the countries targeted in this study are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

This report is not:

- A comprehensive inventory of the existing structures supporting entrepreneurs, their current initiatives, not their impact. The support structures cited throughout the guide are those identified by World Bank teams and whose activities and characteristics have the potential to inspire other actors. In the face of a constantly-evolving ecosystem, it has been deemed undesirable to draw up an exhaustive list. The identification of these structures in the guide does not imply an assessment of the quality of their services by the World Bank Group.
- A blanket advocacy piece in favour of support structures.



INCUBATOR OR SUPPORT STRUCTURE ?

In English, "incubator" or "business incubator" is a generic term for any structure or organization supporting entrepreneurship. The incubator concept is also often understood in a broader sense, referring to support structures for entrepreneurship that provide direct support services to entrepreneurs.

Tony O. Elumelu

FOREWORD 1/2

In 2014, I embarked on the most impactful project of my life so far: The Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) announced the launch of TEF Entrepreneurship Program, a pioneer initiative that refined our focus at the Foundation to exclusively empowering young Africans and championing youth entrepreneurship. Our philosophy was simple: if we empower enterprising young Africans with mentorship, seed capital, business management training and networking opportunities, we can create employment opportunities for millions across the continent, restore economic hope and reduce Africa's great unemployment challenge. Our goal – and we are well on our way to achieving this – is to empower 10,000 African entrepreneurs who will collectively create 1 million jobs and generate $10 billion in revenue over a 10-year period.

Our priority is to invest in Africa's next generation of entrepreneurs and business leaders. This unwavering focus on SME support and development is in recognition of the immense potential of this untapped sector in contributing to employment generation, community development, national income and social prosperity and economic development. SMEs play an increasingly important role on the global stage, creating over 80% of jobs in many parts of the world, and from our own data and experience at the Tony Elumelu Foundation, our entrepreneurs are not only creating jobs, but driving innovation and infusing technology across traditional sectors leading to improved access for the majority and lower user costs. Indeed, they have collectively validated my conviction that the private sector would be the core driver of Africa's economic transformation.

The World Bank's interest in the growth and proliferation of support structures for entrepreneurs in Africa is a welcome initiative. In a continent characterised by well-known challenges, entrepreneurs as a matter of survival must have access to nurture their ideas in spaces that provide them with the facilities, functionalities and resources they need to grow. From Lagos to Nairobi to Johannesburg, incubators and accelerators have become literal life support for some of the continent's high growth startups.

Therefore, it is with great honour that I present "Challenges and opportunities incubators in West Africa: A practical guide to understand everything about the support structures of entrepreneurs in the West African context" - a timely and evidence-based report on the emergence of support structures in West Africa, their important role and need for public-private partnerships to fully harness their potential. Entrepreneurship in Africa is here to stay, and if it is well harnessed, it can lift millions of people out of poverty and catapult the continent into wealth and prosperity.

Tony O. Elumelu, CON
Founder of The Tony Elumelu Foundation

Adama Ouane

FOREWORD 2/2

Innovation is not limited solely to the field of science and high technology. Today, thanks to the evolutions brought about by the digital technology, it is possible to bring innovation, among other things, to business models, to commercial approaches and even in the field of the social and solidarity economy.

Incubators as actors of innovation play an essential role in the maturation phase of a project. Present at both the creation and throughout the life cycle of a company, they make a wide range of services available to young businesses that enable them to engage with markets under the best possible conditions. Incubators thus contribute to the formation of an ecosystem that is conducive to the emergence and development of entrepreneurship. As a structure of support for entrepreneurship, the incubator is designed to turn an innovative idea into a successful business.

Entrepreneurship is the key to any economic recovery program. Businesses, and particularly SMEs, not only actively contribute to the fight against social inequality and thus against poverty, but are also considered to be among the central pillars of development.

I therefore welcome the publication of this report, which will be a key tool in supporting the implementation of programs under the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) that support innovative entrepreneurship and sustainable job creation, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

The "program for the promotion of employment through entrepreneurship among youth and women in sub-Saharan Africa," fits fully into the direction taken by the 80 heads of member states in the Economic Strategy for la Francophonie adopted at the Dakar Summit in 2014. Through this program (currently deployed in 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa), the OIF is fostering entrepreneurship and job creation in innovative sectors and responsible development.

The participatory process of co-construction adopted as part of the implementation of the program including the public and private sectors, civil society, the academic sector, and technical and financial partners, has allowed for the development of targeted solutions that meet the needs of each partner country.

The International Organization of la Francophonie is therefore delighted to be able to strengthen its partnership with the World Bank Group and the Afric'innov program – an initiative financed by the French Development Agency (AFD) to strengthen and professionalize entrepreneurship support structures in Africa. This partnership will stimulate the creative and entrepreneurial dynamism of sub-Saharan Africa. This is the objective of OIF and we call on governments, as well as technical and financial partners, to mobilize.

Adama OUANE
Administrator
International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF)

INTRODUCTION

The population boom in West African countries is bringing more and more young people into a labor market that cannot yet absorb them. Many of these young people are now turning to entrepreneurship as a source of employment. This, however, often takes the form of subsistence and informal entrepreneurship. Unlike growth and innovative entrepreneurship, this form of entrepreneurship is not capable of generating sustainable jobs and therefore cannot act as an engine for economic development.

Innovative entrepreneurship is proven to be a determining factor of growth: it stimulates productivity, creates jobs and helps improve citizens' quality of life. So-called 'growth entrepreneurs' are the drivers behind this innovation and they contribute to their countries' economic and social development. As Joseph Schumpeter once said, "innovation is the driving force of economic progress, and entrepreneurs are the agents of innovation."

Nevertheless, whether innovating, capturing a market opportunity or simply trying to survive, entrepreneurship remains a difficult undertaking in West Africa. Access to bank financing is scarce, the legal and fiscal framework is often unsuited to the needs of startups and there is very little reliable market data. To overcome these difficulties and help entrepreneurs address these constraints, numerous entrepreneurship support structures are emerging throughout the sub-region. These can take various forms: incubators that accompany entrepreneurs early in the process, Fab Labs (fabrication laboratories) that allow innovators to develop a product, accelerators that accompany the scaling up of businesses, among others. The common denominator between these structures is the personalized support they offer entrepreneurs, via a variety of services – provision of facilities, coaching, networking, access to financing – all of which serve as levers for innovation.

Startups need to be incubated like eggs: this is the primary meaning of the word "incubator."

To develop the potential of an innovative project, entrepreneurs needs to engage with an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The different actors in this ecosystem provide the key elements in the implementation of entrepreneurial projects: technical support, access to funding, training, advice, etc. The central role entrepreneurship support structures play in innovation development at this level makes them pillars of their respective ecosystems. Through the technical support they provide, entrepreneurship support structures allow entrepreneurs to develop their company in a way that best addresses the challenge they have identified. Lending credibility to their projects, as well as connecting them to other sources of support, entrepreneurship support structures help their entrepreneurs secure financing. Through the many events they organize, entrepreneurship support structures revitalize entrepreneurial ecosystems by regularly bringing together the various actors necessary to promote entrepreneurship beyond their sphere of influence.

Much like the projects and entrepreneurs they support, these structures have very different levels of professionalization, are often isolated and lack the necessary visibility and resources to develop and implement strong and sustainable support programs. Strengthening, professionalizing and financing these entrepreneurship support structures remain the key issues today if we are to make innovation a lever of dynamism in the African context.

Incubators, and more generally entrepreneurship support structures, must therefore be strengthened and supported in order to better organize ther support they provide to innovators and entrepreneurs: this is the mission that gave rise to the Afric'innov initiative.

This guide is intended to make you understand the work of these entrepreneurship support structures that are building, brick by brick, the foundations of the West African entrepreneurial ecosystem, in partnership with other existing stakeholders. From Dakar to Lagos, from Ouagadougou to Accra, you will discover these key players in Africa's economic development. These institutions are passionately supporting the emergence of innovative startups in Africa and igniting the local dynamics necessary for innovation and competitiveness.

Happy reading!

Christian Jekinnou
Executive Manager
Afric'innov

SUMMARY

THE POTENTIAL OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN WEST AFRICA AND HOW TO STRENGTHEN THEM

Africa is the youngest continent in the world, with 43% of its population aged 14 or less[1]. Its population is also the most enterprising in the world: in Nigeria, 39.9% of people aged between 18 and 65 years old are engaged in entrepreneurial activities. Senegal and Ghana have similarly-impressive proportions of their working age populations working in entrepreneurship (38.6% and 26% respectively), compared to just 9.9% in India and 5.3% in France[2]. However, entrepreneurship often merely represents an activity of necessity for younger Africans. Indeed, 30% of entrepreneurs aged between 16 and 35 in Africa consider their work to be a subsistence activity[3]. It is also important to note that the majority of young Africans are inadequately trained to tackle the typical challenges an entrepreneur might encounter, as 57% of young adults do not have a high school diploma.

Despite this strong entrepreneurial spirit, therefore, high-growth local businesses are poorly represented and investment remains low. In 2017, just $560 million in venture capital was raised in Africa. Even though venture capital is rising by an annual growth rate of 53%, this is still far below the $9.6 billion raised in India (which has a comparable population and development level), and represents a meagre share of the $84.2 billion raised worldwide[4].

Nevertheless, certain macroeconomic indicators, such as economic growth, the emergence of a middle class, mobile and internet penetration, could give rise to new opportunities for entrepreneurs on the continent. For example, in 2016 the mobile phone penetration rate in sub-Saharan Africa was 74%, and 20% of the population had access to the Internet[5].

Growth entrepreneurs – entrepreneurs driven by opportunity, demonstrating the will and capacity to innovate and grow their business – are still under-represented on the continent. Several factors come into play if they are to fully emerge in sub-Saharan African economies. These are promoting an entrepreneurial ecosystem through public policy, access to finance, an entrepreneurial culture, human capital, as well as support to the private sector and markets. Entrepreneurial ecosystems in West Africa currently have many gaps, which discourage the creation of innovative and high-growth businesses.

In recent years, support structures such as incubators have proliferated throughout the region and are providing a response from the local community to fill some of these gaps in existing ecosystems. As of 2018, the African continent has more than 440 support structures for entrepreneurs, with an exceptional growth of 40% compared to 2016[6]. The fastest-growing African economies are also the most favorable to the exponential emergence of these actors. This trend includes West Africa, where more than 100 support structures dedicated to growth entrepreneurs have launched, even though there were none just 15 years ago. Their goal is to accompany entrepreneurs on their journey so that they are the bearers of innovation and can generate stable and decent jobs. Moreover, these support structures seek to foster the emergence and competitiveness of local businesses and positively impact their local economy.

Some support structures offer personalized support to aspiring entrepreneurs (incubators, accelerators, startup studios), compared to those that simply provide shared services to entrepreneurs (nurseries, business hotels). Third place type structures (coworking spaces, Fab Labs), meanwhile, promote the exchange of skills, knowledge and resources. These support structures usually offer entrepreneurs advisory services, access to equipped and connected facilities and to a broader network, as well as support to secure funding for their startups. In Africa, incubators are the most represented, though they also provide services that are generally associated with third places and tend to diversify by including acceleration programs. Nevertheless, each structure is unique - both in the services they offer and their business model.

Support structures fulfill a mission of broad public interest by seeking to fill public service gaps where the State has failed to respond effectively to the needs of entrepreneurs and the private sector. These structures are now in the maturation phase (average age of 4 years in West Africa) and are undergoing professionalization.

Their place at the heart of the entrepreneurial ecosystem has elevated these support structures as the potential partners of choice for all who wish to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and job creation for better socio-economic and environmental outcomes in the region. Innovative young companies and growth entrepreneurs are the first to be influenced by support structures' services, as they realize their ambitions and get their businesses off the ground. Public policymakers and institutions can also work with these structures to achieve common goals of sustainable development. Investors, research institutes and even multinational companies are also potential partners who could invest in these structures as a trusted third party. Specific examples of such partnerships are presented in this report.

Considering the multiple opportunities support structures represent, this guide also offers a series of recommendations for policymakers, development institutions and other relevant stakeholders. Based on our findings, the aim is to guide stakeholders on the measures that could help these new players in the ecosystem maximize their impact and succeed. Finally, the guide concludes by emphasizing the urgent need to fill other gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystem – particularly training young people and finding new sources of investment for the private sector – in order to encourage the emergence of a more dynamic, innovative and competitive private sector in West Africa.

PART I:

CONTEXT

CONTEXT

A socio-economic analysis of West Africa shows that entrepreneurship growth today has the potential to emerge and tackle many challenges facing the region. In essence, entrepreneurship drives the levers of inclusive development, all the more so with the advent of new technologies.

To stimulate entrepreneurship with high growth potential, West African economies must fill the existing gaps in their entrepreneurial ecosystems. Although the latter are becoming more structured and promising, governments still need to implement appropriate policies to create the necessary enabling environment for growth entrepreneurship.

1. THE POTENTIAL OF GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN WEST AFRICA

The common ambition among African governments today is rapid and inclusive development. Despite some countries' strong growth rates (12.7% in Guinea, 8.5% in Ghana, 7.8% in Côte d'Ivoire, 6.8% in Senegal and 6.7% in Burkina Faso in 2017 according to the World Bank), the mechanisms for the creation and distribution of wealth in West Africa remain fallible. The result is meagre prospects for human development, which in turn hinders economic growth. In order to reverse this trend, willing institutions are coming together to coordinate. Global and pan-African strategies are now focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals, a prerequisite for the emergence of new, innovative and enterprising societies.

The new marked political interest in innovative entrepreneurship goes hand in hand with the need to conceptualize and implement new development models that are designed and adapted to Africa's unique characteristics in a global context of technological progress and border permeability. In West Africa, where the many challenges of human and economic development are an opportunity, governments and entrepreneurs share the same goal: to respond effectively and sustainably to the needs of the people.

1.1. Factors driving entrepreneurship's emerging potential to foster growth

Exponential population growth and rapid urbanization are the common denominators of African economies. Across the continent, these factors have underpinned the expansion of domestic markets. Household consumption is growing at an average annual rate of 5.3%, draining investment growth (2.5% per year). Cities now attract nearly 30% of the population and this share is expected to double over the next thirty years. While rapid urbanization represents many challenges (urban poverty, insecurity, etc.), it nevertheless offers an unprecedented opportunity to spark the emergence <and strengthening of a middle class in Africa that is already driving the intensification and diversification of consumer markets[7].

Figure 1. Comparison of average annual population growth rates 1960-2017

	1960	2017
Benin	1.3	2.8
Burkina Faso	1.4	2.9
Cape Verde	1.2	1.3
Côte d'Ivoire	3.5	2.5
The Gambia	3	3
Ghana	3.2	2.2
Guinea	1.6	2.6
Guinea Bissau	1.2	2.5
Liberia	2.2	2.5
Mali	1.1	3
Mauritania	2.9	2.7
Niger	2.8	3.8
Nigeria	2.0	2.6
Senegal	2.7	2.8
Sierra Leone	1.3	2.2
Chad	1.9	3
Togo	1.3	2.5

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest average annual population growth rate in the world (2.7% in 2017). By 2060, the region will be home to roughly 2.8 billion people.

The dynamics of this population growth vary greatly from one country to the next, as well as between cities and the countryside. Infant mortality may have declined in the majority of countries, but fertility rates have been slow to decline significantly in the Sahel region, for example. By contrast, West Africa's economic, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, have experienced much faster declines in their fertility and birth rates.

Overall, sub-Saharan Africa's birth rate has fallen from 48 per thousand in 1990 to 36 per thousand in 2016, while the fertility rate has declined from 6.3 to 4.8 children per woman over the same period - a trend that is expected to continue.

As the working age population grows, the number of children and other dependents is expected to decrease, which means that Africa will finally be densely populated, with a population that is both able to produce and consume. Most importantly, the working age population is expected to grow proportionately faster than the dependent population[8].

Source: World Bank

There are also other factors that have contributed to Africa's gradual economic transition in the last two decades. Robust but painful structural adjustments have allowed for a better control of inflation, reduced public deficits and external debt and the recovery of external balances. The privatization and liberalization of international trade, despite ambivalent results in some areas, have also contributed to improving the competitiveness and productivity of African economies[7].

Between 2010 and 2015, 7 of the 10 economies with the strongest growth rates worldwide were African. Despite the fall in oil prices that has had a particularly negative impact on Nigeria, the largest economy in the sub-region, the GDP of most West African countries today (including landlocked countries with no natural resources) continues to grow by more than 5% a year.

Figure 2. Annual GDP growth rates in 2017

2017		2017		2017	
Benin	5,6 %	Guinea	12,7 %	Nigeria	0,8 %
Burkina Faso	6,7 %	Guinea Bissau	5,9 %	Senegal	6,8 %
Cape Verde	3,9 %	Liberia	2,5 %	Sierra Leone	4,2 %
Côte d'Ivoire	7,8 %	Mali	5,3 %	Chad	-3 %
The Gambia	3,5 %	Mauritania	3,5 %	Togo	5,6 %
Ghana	8,5 %	Niger	4,9 %		

Source: World Bank

West Africa's economic growth, however, has not been sufficiently inclusive, failing to substantially impact the most labor-intensive and high value-added areas for the continent (agribusiness and manufacturing).[9] This explains why just 16% of Africans have access to a regular salary,[10] which limits the impact of this growth in terms of human development. The rise in insecurity and political turmoil that West Africa has experienced in recent years also has its roots in the difficulty young people experience in securing access to employment[11]. With the entry of 450 million young people into the labor market by 2050 across the continent,[9] it is imperative for public authorities and economic actors to find new sources of sustainable jobs.

At the same time, Africa enjoys the densest and youngest working-age population in the world[9]. This population is also the most enterprising. In Ghana and Senegal, more than a third of the workforce is engaged in entrepreneurial activity[2]. This visible majority is a key driver of African economies' potential and governments have an incentive to support these activities so that they, in turn, can become a proactive force for economic and social development.

DEFINITION:
ENTREPRENEURSHIP[12]

Entrepreneurship lies in the ability and willingness of individuals or groups of individuals, inside or outside of an existing organization, to perceive and create new economic opportunities and bring their ideas to the market, facing uncertainty and many obstacles, in making decisions on location, form and the use of resources and institutions.

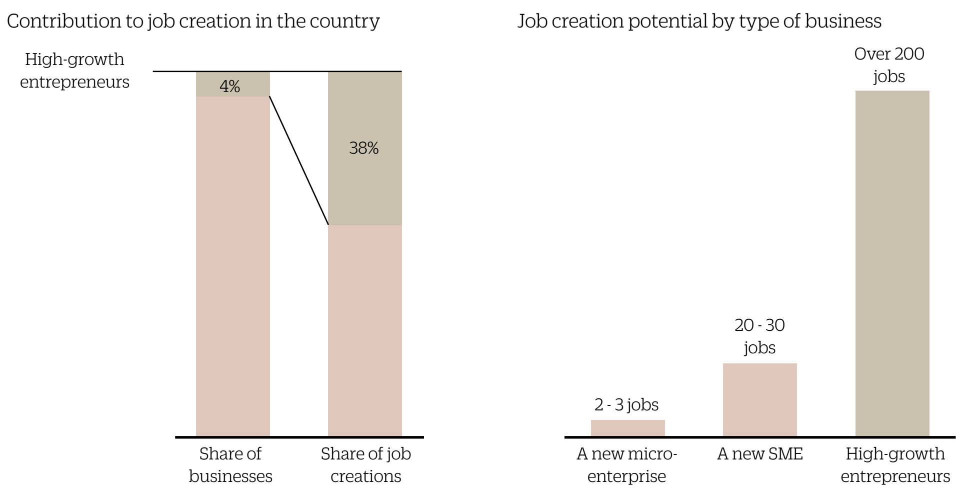
There is a difference between subsistence entrepreneurship, which is driven by the need to create a business in order to survive, and growth entrepreneurship (also known as innovative entrepreneurship), which is instead driven by opportunity, with the ambition to innovate and grow a business.

1.2. Installing the levers of inclusive development via growth entrepreneurship

Growth entrepreneurship is a vector for creating and distributing wealth. It has the potential to increase employment opportunities and thereby absorb a significant share of the one million new African labor market entrants that arrive each month[13], while also playing a crucial role in the job market through the inclusion of young people and women. Growth entrepreneurship, finally, has the potential to solve major local problems, be it in the areas of health, education, agriculture, finance, energy or transport.

When operating in a formal and responsible framework, private enterprises directly and positively impact populations' standard of living by giving them access to stable jobs, regular incomes well above those of the informal sector and social rights, as well as continuous opportunities to learn and be trained. Businesses can develop innovative and affordable solutions specifically targeted to meet the many primary and secondary needs of consumers. Thus, entrepreneurship drains both demand and supply, boosts domestic markets and improves national competitiveness[14].

Figure 3. Contribution of high-growth entrepreneurs to job creation



Source: World Bank[14]

Entrepreneurship takes many forms. Differentiating between growth and subsistence entrepreneurship is essential, however, if entrepreneurship is to be a mechanism for inclusive development. A recent study found that only 6% of companies in sub-Saharan Africa achieve high growth, while the vast majority of entrepreneurs remain self-employed at a subsistence level, whose activities most often involve replicating existing models with low productivity levels[14].

While support for subsistence entrepreneurs can be a useful tool for supporting the poor, research shows that support for growth entrepreneurship alone is enough to generate societal benefits, especially macroeconomic growth, structural transformation and the realization of the positive externalities of entrepreneurship mentioned above (rising incomes, job creation, innovation, etc.)[15]. As proof, another study of 70,000 entrepreneurs in more than 60 countries (mainly developing countries), found that despite only 4% of respondents running high-growth companies, these entrepreneurs nevertheless account for 38% of all jobs created by all the companies surveyed[15].

DEFINITIONS: SUBSISTENCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP VS. GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP[15]

A subsistence entrepreneur is a person who engages in an entrepreneurial activity primarily to derive a source of personal living income. A subsistence entrepreneur does not create, neither does he aspire to, create job opportunities for people outside his immediate family circle.

A growth entrepreneur is a person who sets the goal of creating a dynamic company, which must reach a critical size and therefore offers opportunities for employment and income to outsiders, as well as the potential to innovate.

The development of growth entrepreneurship is based on firm requirements relating to the individual characteristics of entrepreneurs (level of experience, age, personality), the structure of their company (years of existence, size, sector, etc.) and their environment (legislation, human capital, access to finance, market access, infrastructure, culture, etc.)[15]. In addition, although empirical research shows that there is significant sectoral diversity in growth entrepreneurship and that not all growth entrepreneurs are necessarily technology-driven, technology can nevertheless be a differentiating factor for them[15].

BOX 1. EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE AND IMPACTFUL AFRICAN STARTUPS

HEALTH
MPedigree (Ghana): Provides technological solutions to control pharmaceutical industry supply chains. This is to prevent the intrusion of counterfeit and dangerous health products.

ENERGY
Rensource Energy (Nigeria): A leader in solar energy access solutions in Nigeria, Rensource produces electricity through hybrid systems that are installed directly at the customer's premises. An integrated solution also allows them to manage their production and energy consumption at a lower cost.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION
ACEP (Burkina Faso): A microfinance company that has established itself as one of the leading national players in microfinance by providing adequate financing to small entrepreneurs in urban and peri-urban areas.

ENVIRONMENT
Green Keeper Africa (Benin): Designs, manufactures and sells 100% organic absorbents, from water hyacinth, for professionals to control leaks of pollutants.

TRADE
Exportunity (Benin): A startup selected as part of Tony Elumelu Foundation Programme in 2015 for its virtual market that enables 85,000 producers across Africa to sell their production upstream, and buyers from across the world to place their orders with an African-stop shop.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES
Drone Africa Service (Niger): Specializing in civil drones, the company offers a wide range of services (aerial photos and videos, mapping, etc.) in various sectors: agriculture, protected area surveillance, prevention, risk and disaster management, construction, communication, art, tourism, etc.

AGRIBUSINESS
Cowtribe Africa (Ghana): A digital platform that provides farmers with continuous access to advice from veterinarians present throughout the country, who can move in less than 24 hours for an intervention. The platform also sends SMS alerts to members with information on outbreaks and offers practical advice.

BREEDING
Farmcrowdy (Nigeria): A digital platform that connects investors to farmers through a sponsorship system, allowing them to produce more in exchange for a portion of the proceeds. The service allows sponsors to search and select opportunities by product type, amount of funding, duration of the contract and expected return.

1.3. Boosting entrepreneurs' development potential with new technologies

West Africa is currently undergoing the most important information and communications revolution in its history. Mobile adoption in West Africa has almost doubled, from 28% at the turn of the decade to 47% in 2017, with 176 million unique subscribers in the 15 ECOWAS member states[5]. Equally important is the number of Internet subscribers – mainly mobile – which has doubled in the last four years to 78 million, or 22% of the population[5]. In fact, these users are more likely to enjoy access to cell phones than to toilets or clean water. In terms of economic impact, the mobile phone ecosystem contributed $37 billion to West Africa's economy in 2017, or 6.5% of the region's overall GDP. In addition, the total value-added generated by the mobile ecosystem was $14 billion, or 2.5% of regional GDP[16]. Moreover, as has been observed in other regions, opportunities to harness the potential of the Internet to spur growth and development remain untapped[5].

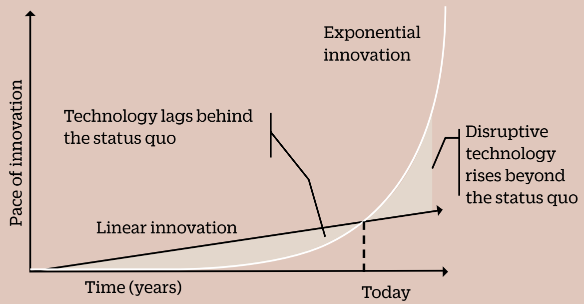
By promoting efficiency, innovation and inclusion, this rapid evolution of technology has the potential to jumpstart West African growth, leapfrogging the traditional development trajectory by offering the poor and disadvantaged access to a world of possibilities that were previously out of reach. That's not all, however. The rise of new technologies also presents new business opportunities to entrepreneurs. Mobile money, for example, has become a key element of emerging business models in the region, including those that seek to improve access, efficiency and productivity across various sectors. A key use case of mobile money is the digitization of agricultural value chains, which provides significant benefits to farmers in terms of financial inclusion[17]. Having a mobile money account allows farmers to digitally conduct transactions with suppliers and buyers and to interact with public services, as well as pay school and healthcare fees for their family. This transaction history, which is linked to other datapoints such as the precise location of farms and cultivated land, can provide a base for fintech entrepreneurs to assess farmers' creditworthiness, paving the way to formalized agricultural credit, insurance and savings schemes.

This technological shift offers major opportunities to African entrepreneurs, as viable technology-related business models can be developed for all sectors of the economy in order to address major constraints and support productivity growth. Nevertheless, before this potential can be taken advantage of and human development and economic growth supported by entrepreneurship can be fostered across West Africa, a complex set of policies must be put in place in both the public and private sector.

In order to identify these policies, however, we must first have a better understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape today. What is the current entrepreneurial environment in West Africa? What are the region's specific bottlenecks that prevent entrepreneurs from achieving significant growth rates? How can the necessary conditions for high-growth entrepreneurship and its positive externalities be established?

BOX 2. CASE STUDY: THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF THE WORLD BANK ON DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

>> Context and objectives: Beyond information and communications technology (ICT), disruptive technologies are redefining lifestyles. Drones, autonomous cars, 3D printers, blockchains, artificial intelligence, nanotechnologies, among others, have had and will continue to have an increasing impact on households, businesses, supply chains and interactions between citizens and governments. Will rural communities be able to source clean and cheap energy? Can biotechnology help agricultural crops become more resilient? How can we take advantage of the rapid increase in digital connectivity to empower communities in less developed regions by facilitating access to financial services, health information and educational resources?

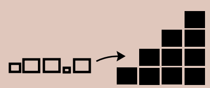


While these changes could allow developing countries to skip some steps along the traditional development path, for the leaders of these countries, these disruptive technologies also risk exacerbating challenges and increasing the risk of some populations being left behind.

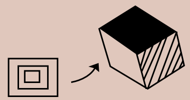
>> Value proposition:
Given the uncertainty, risks and opportunities associated with disruptive technologies, the World Bank is one of the few global players that can support the implementation of new ways to foster sustainable development, implicating partners such as large technology companies like Amazon and LinkedIn.

The World Bank's value proposition thus falls under three areas:

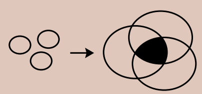
Build: Develop the foundations of a sustainable, technology-driven economy



Boost: Increase the capacity of individuals and institutions to thrive in a resilient society in the face of disruptions



Broker: Leverage technology, data and expertise to solve development and risk management issues



As part of the 'Build' axis, the WBG seeks to participate in the strengthening of entrepreneurial ecosystems that are conducive to innovation and the development and adoption of disruptive technologies.

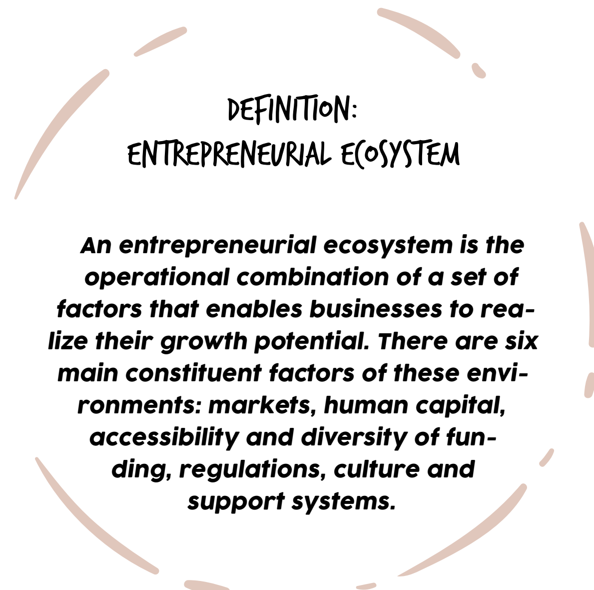
>> To learn more: Mahmoud Mohieldin. 2018. Development and Disruptive Technology. Washington, DC: World Bank[18].

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
Macro and microeconomic conditions are in place to foster the emergence of growth entrepreneurship in West Africa.	Growth entrepreneurship triggers an ethical and inclusive dynamism between human development and economic growth in the sub-region.	Entrepreneurs can take advantage of the ongoing technological revolution to maximize their growth and impact on West African societies.

2. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF WEST AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS

We concluded in the previous section that there is an imperative need to implement actionable frameworks that are favorable to the emergence of private businesses with high growth potential. Better knowledge and understanding of these frameworks, however, is a prerequisite. Who are the actors involved? What are their roles? How do they create a set of actions that is coherent and operational? What success factors do they put in place in the ecosystem to facilitate entrepreneurial success? What constraints and obstacles do they encounter within these same frameworks?

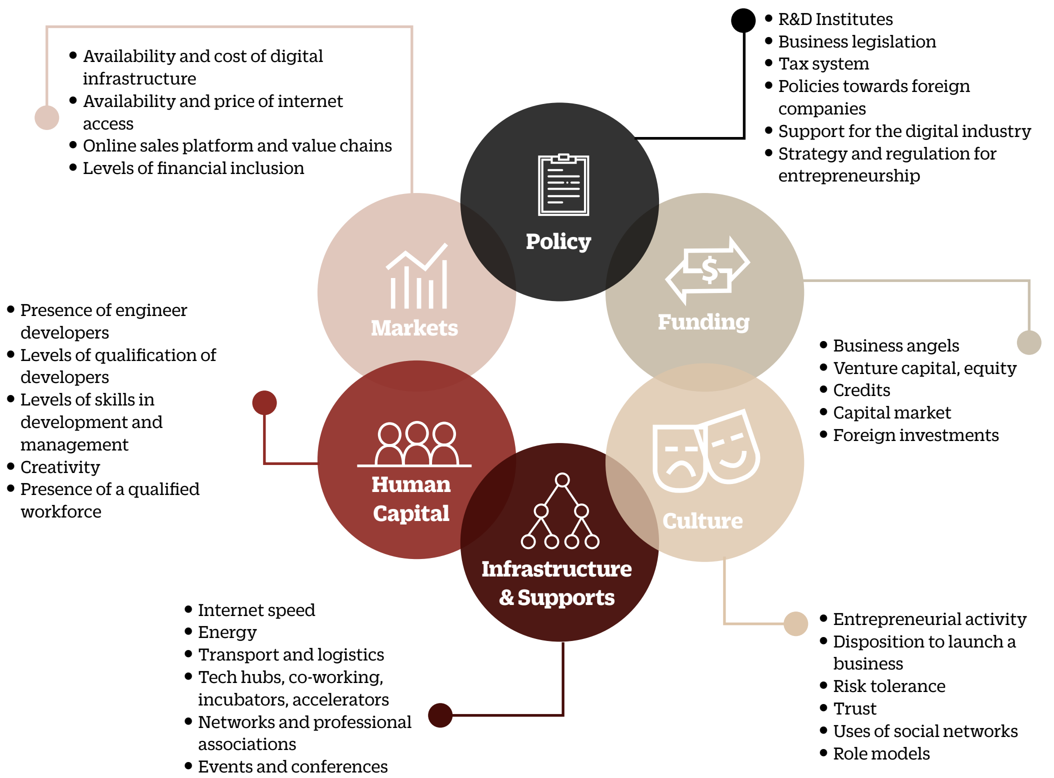
The evaluation of these frameworks for entrepreneurship in West Africa is of paramount importance, as it will allow us to identify the blockages and drivers of high-potential entrepreneurship. From these observations, it is then possible to define the parameters and mechanisms that will strengthen interventions and programs seeking to foster growth entrepreneurship.



DEFINITION: ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

An entrepreneurial ecosystem is the operational combination of a set of factors that enables businesses to realize their growth potential. There are six main constituent factors of these environments: markets, human capital, accessibility and diversity of funding, regulations, culture and support systems.

Figure 4. Constituent factors of the entrepreneurial ecosystem



Source: Daniel Isenberg. 2014. What an entrepreneurship ecosystem actually is. Harvard Business Review. Watertown, Massachusets.

2.1. Analyzing the components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem

In order to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems in West Africa, an initial assessment of their strengths and weaknesses is first necessary. This assessment should consist of the following set of questions.

Figure5. Components of an entrepreneurial ecosystem

COMPONENT	WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW
Finance	Who are the actors financing entrepreneurship? What financing mechanisms do entrepreneurs have access to? What are the conditions of and restrictions to accessing this financing?
Human capital	Do supply and demand match in the labor market? Are the professional skills and the necessary human resources available? What are the levels of education and vocational training among the general population?
Culture	How is entrepreneurship viewed in mainstream culture? Can it stimulate strong entrepreneurial vocations? Do mainstream values coincide with the entrepreneurial state of mind?
Markets	Do entrepreneurs have enough business opportunities? Do they have easy access to markets?
Infrastructure and support systems	Is infrastructure sufficiently developed (roads, ports, communication networks, access to electricity, etc.)? Do existing services support entrepreneurship? What do they offer exactly? Which institutions are dedicated to the development of entrepreneurship and what is their role? Are they effective?
Regulation	Are governments aware of the issues and challenges surrounding growth entrepreneurship? Are they proactive in implementing policies that are conducive to its development? What have been the results of past and ongoing initiatives? Which resources have the authorities dedicated to supporting entrepreneurship?

The components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, while distinct, are interdependent. Each can impact the other, in positive or negative ways. Chain reactions, unintentional consequences and externalities are common. In particular, regulatory and legal frameworks exert a great deal of influence, as well as significantly impacting other components of the ecosystem. Whether national or supranational, taxation regimes put in place by the authorities will affect companies' access to markets, financing and a myriad of other factors they need to succeed.

Understanding these different components of the ecosystem and evaluating how they overlap and interplay is also essential to developing appropriate policy instruments to fostering entrepreneurship. There is often a tendency to equate the structure of an ecosystem to that of the state. Of course, national characteristics are essential to understanding and defining an ecosystem, however this is not always the most accurate level of analysis. Within a single country, several ecosystems can coexist. Thus, in West Africa, there is an intense concentration of actors and initiatives in capital cities, while other parts of a country are less connected, or even totally excluded from networks and opportunities. Conversely, an ecosystem can have borders that extend beyond national boundaries. In West Africa, for example, special consideration should be given to the sub-regional ecosystem, which is often perceived as a single market by many companies in West Africa whose smaller national markets cannot absorb their production if and when they expand. The geographical limits of an ecosystem must therefore be defined early in any assessment.

2.2. Immature but promising entrepreneurial ecosystems

Entrepreneurial ecosystems are the cradles of growth entrepreneurship. In West Africa, these ecosystems are still nascent.

>> Financing

40% of West African companies identify financing as the main obstacle to their development[20]. West African growth entrepreneurs are confronted with the classic "valley of death" conundrum - the time lapse between when the entrepreneur's own resources come from family and friends ("love money") and when the business is financially viable enough to attract investments and funds from the market. The shortage of funding on the market begins at the pre-startup stage ($20,000) and ends at the Series A stage ($1 million). Microfinance is of course not suitable to such entrepreneurs, as it offers amounts that are too small and better suited to short-term loans that require imposing high interest rates. Banks, on the other hand, are cautious in light of entrepreneurs' high-risk profiles, as they often have neither the means nor formal borrowing history to prove their creditworthiness. More appropriate financial instruments such as venture capital funds, business angels, and other alternative tools such as interest-free loans and crowdfunding, are just emerging in West Africa and remain far too few.

Some figures on investment in startups in the region

West Africa is a region consisting of 17 countries with a total population of about 370 million people, which means roughly 28% of the African population lives in West Africa. According to Partech Ventures[4], in 2017 124 African tech startups raised a total of $560 million in shares through 128 rounds. 26% of this funding was allocated to startups in West Africa, which seems fairly proportional to the population. However, 80% of this investment was captured by Nigerian startups, which is hardly proportional considering that Nigeria only accounts for half the West African population.

>> Human capital

According to the reference index of entrepreneurial ecosystems[21], the quality of human resources is the most detrimental factor impeding the takeoff of entrepreneurship in West Africa. Higher education is not as widely accessible in the sub-region as in the other parts of the world and governments attach too low an importance to vocational and technical training. In addition, due to a lack of awareness and virtually nonexistent training in business skills across curricula and in higher education, entrepreneurial skills (business creation, operations, management, etc.) remain poorly developed in the sub-region.

>> Culture

Entrepreneurial culture is the factor for which West African countries get the best results, according to the same index[21]. We define entrepreneurial culture as the degree to which members of a society consider entrepreneurship to be a rewarding career choice and the impact of corruption on this general mindset. In West Africa, where the majority of the inhabitants engage in an entrepreneurial activity (most often informally), the culture is de facto characterized by a mild hostility towards entrepreneurs. However, the index also points out that risk aversion is low in West Africa, reflecting a fear of failure as a major impediment to the development of businesses – except for women in certain contexts.

>> Markets

According to the same index[21], West African entrepreneurs are successful in building professional networks that lead to market opportunities, but they still experience significant difficulties in accessing markets. At the national level, geographical and sectoral growth poles are too underdeveloped, whereas they could facilitate horizontal and vertical commercial links that remain unexploited between entrepreneurs and the largest companies, particularly foreign ones. At the regional level, meanwhile, though the small size of the West African markets should incentivize high-growth entrepreneurs to quickly expand, they still face barriers to trade and divergent regulatory frameworks that are tough to navigate.

>> Infrastructure and support systems

The lack of physical infrastructure is invariably cited by West African companies as one of the main obstacles to their growth, with poor access to electricity, for instance, considered as the second major constraint to companies' development in the sub-region[20]. Apart from availability, infrastructure's accessibility in terms of price is also a barrier. Moreover, while there has been an increase in Internet penetration rates in West Africa, the cost of connecting is the highest worldwide compared to other regions[22]. Infrastructural deficits partly explain the proliferation of very small informal businesses in the sub-region, acting as a major obstacle to the expansion of more ambitious and large-scale enterprises[23].

In recent years many private, public, academic, institutional and associative schemes have emerged in West Africa, contributing to a better structuring of ecosystems. The diversity of local or international actors involved determines the variety and range of services on offer: incubators and accelerators, coworking spaces, competitions and prizes, university research laboratories, training courses, networks of experts, etc. Although very rarely at the origin of these initiatives, governments are relevant and paramount to the implementation of policies that support high-growth entrepreneurs.

>> Policy and regulation

Most West African governments are paying increasing attention to private sector development. Some have privatized public agencies dedicated to SME development, while others have established one-stop shops that bring together the various administrative steps to set up a business, making life easier for entrepreneurs by streamlining the registration process. However, according to the Doing Business Index[24], which is designed to rate countries by ease of doing business based on a weighted average of several factors, all West African countries find themselves in the lower half of the worldwide ranking. This suggests a generally unfavorable business climate for entrepreneurs.

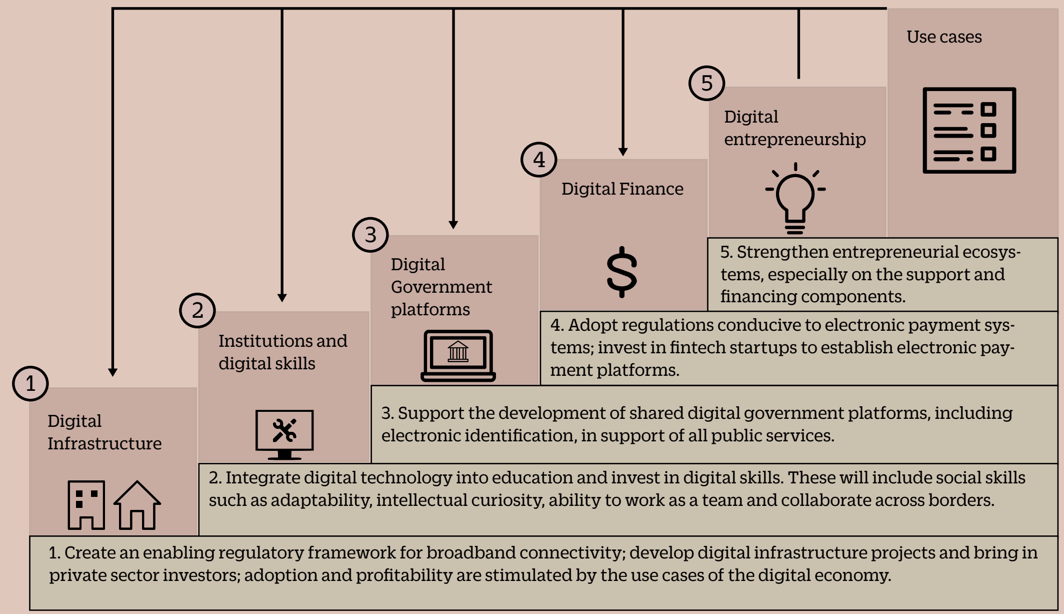
BOX 3. THE WORLD BANK'S DIGITAL ECONOMY INITIATIVE IN AFRICA

>> Context and objectives: By embracing the telecommunications revolution in the 2000s, sub-Saharan Africa has demonstrated its ability to seize on a technological opportunity. Today, it is about embark on the latest digital revolution. In order to take full advantage of this, however, countries must already have five essential pillars: infrastructure, theoretical and practical skills, financial services, government digital platforms, entrepreneurship and innovation.

In April 2018, during the Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank launched the Digital Economy for Africa Initiative (DE4A), with the support of African Ministers of finance and telecommunications, Governors of central banks, global technology and telecoms giants were also present, as well as local and regional Internet platforms, think tanks, thought leaders, digital entrepreneurs and development partners. This event highlighted the role of digital technology as a new catalyst of growth, discussed processes that need to be put in place and analyzed the dangers for countries that could be left behind.

>> Strategy:

The DE4A Initiative follows a framework of five axes, used in the definition of national strategies to support the digital economy.



>> To learn more: World Bank. 2018. Digital Economy for Africa. Washington DC: World Bank.

2.3. The role of government in stimulating entrepreneurship

While international empirical experience proves that supporting growth entrepreneurship can generate up to 100 times more jobs than supporting microenterprises and subsistence enterprises, national strategies for entrepreneurship in West Africa have generally focused on securing financing for subsistence micro-entrepreneurship and have historically neglected growth entrepreneurship[12]. West African states have thus primarily contributed to the expansion of self-employment, rather than the promotion of waged employment and productivity, which are the essential factors for high-growth entrepreneurship.

Policy instruments for stimulating high-growth entrepreneurship are actually many and can be classified into five categories: capacity-building for businesses, access to finance, access to markets, the legislative and regulatory environment and infrastructure[12]. These five dimensions demonstrate the importance of the role of government in structuring ecosystems, whose components can be directly impacted by political will and action.

The general momentum around entrepreneurship at the moment, coupled with the emergence of stronger entrepreneurial ecosystems, have made West African States more aware of the opportunities at stake for their countries' economic and social development. In Senegal, for example, the recent creation of the Délégation à l'Entrepreneuriat Rapide (DER) is a testament to the government's ambition to engage with and support entrepreneurs. The Délégation is responsible for setting up a public dialogue with young innovative companies in order to put more appropriate regulations and financing mechanisms in place. Regional and international economic communities are also increasingly advocating and mobilizing governments around strategic and structural projects to reinforce entrepreneurial ecosystems. These strategic objectives also keep the importance of building ecosystems at the supranational level in mind.

BOX 4. FOCUS ON REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES' STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT SMES AND TECHNOLOGIES

ECOWAS Strategy and Charter of MSMES

In 2016, the ECOWAS member states adopted the Strategy and Charter of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in West Africa. The implementation of this formal framework, designed to support the emergence and development of the private sector in the region, is based on the following 5 areas:

- Regional capacity-building programs
- Regional partnership platforms
- Development of regional entrepreneurship
- Facilitation of access to regional funding
- Promotion of regional companies

SMEs in the WAEMU Community Charter

In 2015, the WAEMU Commission, conscious of the role SMEs play in the region's economic and social development, adopted a community charter for SMEs. Following the logic of a market without internal borders, companies must be treated according to common rules, particularly as there are multiple interactions between national and community support measures for SMEs. This charter thus serves as a framework for action for the WAEMU Commission and member states in order to implement a regional strategy for the emergence of strong and competitive SMEs.

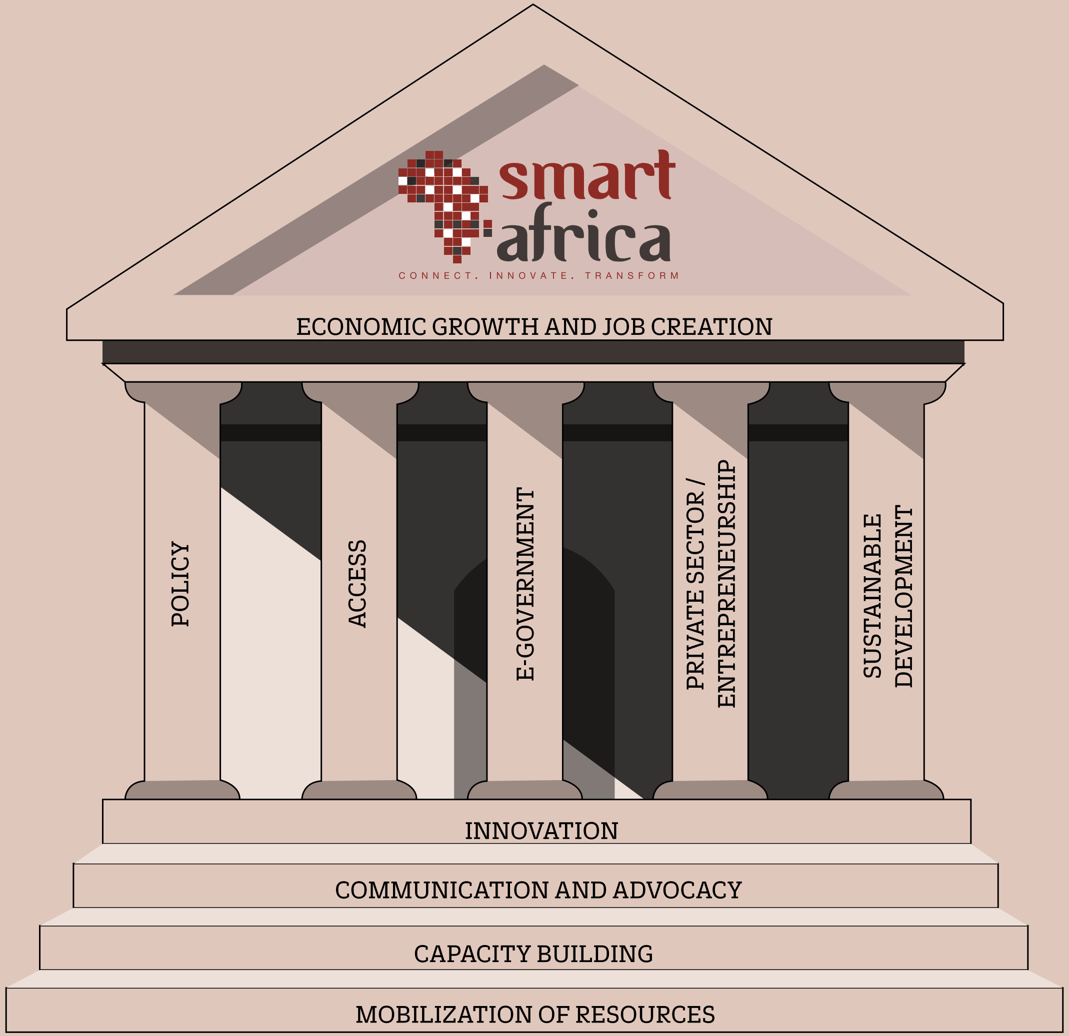
The Charter seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

- Provide SMEs with a favorable environment for their expansion
- Give a general definition of SMEs
- Take better account of SMEs' specificity and vulnerability by granting them advantages
- Provide SMEs with multifaceted support in order to increase their competitiveness
- Determine SMEs' obligations and commitments
- Define the role of Union bodies and Member States in the promotion and development of SMEs

The African Union's "Smart Africa" Program

Adopted in 2013, the "Smart Africa" Manifesto gave rise to the Smart Africa Alliance, which has been adopted as a flagship project of the African Union (AU). Based on the potential of new technologies, the Alliance intends to skip several steps in the traditional development process by:

- Putting ICT at the heart of national socio-economic development programs
- Improving access to ICTs - especially broadband services
- Improving the efficiency and transparency of governance through ICT and e-government
- Giving priority to the private sector and entrepreneurship
- Leveraging ICT to promote sustainable development



Calls for governments from entrepreneurs to improve their working environment are growing in number. Since they are rarely organized, however, the impact of such lobbying attempts is usually limited. As previously mentioned, support structures are now key players in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Africa and can themselves play a role in advocating for better policies. In fact, more often than not, support structures are the first in their societies to engage in such advocacy and then gradually succeed in captivating the interest of other stakeholders and in encouraging them to contribute as well. Governments are increasingly seeing the value of these actors and the benefit of working with them in order to design and implement appropriate and effective policies to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems for growth entrepreneurship. Before governments and other actors like donors can collaborate with support structures, however, they need to better understand the role and impact these organizations have on their ecosystems.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
An entrepreneurial ecosystem is the environment in which entrepreneurs operate. It brings together different actors and initiatives at the service of entrepreneurship development, which are generally classified into six categories: financing, human capital, culture, market, infrastructure and support systems, policy and regulation.	In West Africa, entrepreneurial ecosystems are gradually structuring themselves to help entrepreneurs emerge, but they suffer from significant structural weaknesses, especially the scarcity of funding opportunities and the limited involvement of government.	The role of the State is crucial in sustainably strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems, as they have the capacity and legitimacy to positively influence and strengthen each of the ecosystem's components. To do this, they can rely on incubators which play their part to fill some of the key gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

PART II
INSIGHTS

UNDERSTANDING SUPPORT STRUCTURES' VALUE PROPOSITION

Like everywhere else in the world, entrepreneurship support structures have multiplied across the African continent. Although still new players on the scene, these organizations have a decisive role to play in nascent entrepreneurial ecosystems, enjoying a unique proximity relationship with entrepreneurs and innovators.

These support structures are a response driven by civil society to address some of the shortcomings of local entrepreneurial ecosystems. This section presents their objectives and the general and specific services they can offer. Different existing structural models for support structures are presented, as well as the positions they adopt in order to act with flexibility and efficiency in favor of growth entrepreneurship.

Incubator or support structure?
In English, "incubator" or "business incubator" is a generic term for any structure supporting entrepreneurship. The notion of an incubator is often understood in a broader sense, though it actually refers to an entrepreneurship support structure providing services to entrepreneurs.

1. RESPONDING TO ENTREPRENEURS' MULTIFACETED NEEDS

Silicon Valley, like its European and Asian equivalents, is littered with the same types of structures and organizations that support entrepreneurship: incubators, accelerators, co-working spaces, Fab Labs, etc. Africa is, of course, not immune to this trend. Support structures help thousands of entrepreneurs take off every year and achieve growth by providing logistical, methodological and commercial support, as well as the necessary network and even business and financing opportunities to succeed.

BOX 5. HISTORY OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES AROUND THE WORLD

A little history... from New York to Dakar
The idea of companies sharing space became popular in the late 1970s in the United States. The first business incubator (Batavia Industrial Center) was set up in New York when the Mancusos family entrepreneurs decided to make use of an empty factory building they had bought. They eventually leased the space to help small businesses gain access to office space and several companies benefited from the building in the early stages of their development. Considered to be the first structure of its kind, the model has become an economic development tool for policymakers at the local, regional and national level.

Since the 1980s, the United States has witnessed a proliferation of support structures for young companies. These companies offer startups, entrepreneurs and SMEs the support, expertise and tools they need to succeed in an increasingly competitive market. From just 12 in 1980 to 350 in 2000 in North America[26], the number of support structures has exploded throughout the world. In Europe, support for young and small businesses spread first to the United Kingdom in the 1980s, then progressively throughout Europe. By the end of the 1990s, there were 150 incubators and support structures for entrepreneurship throughout Europe.

In Africa, the first incubators appeared in the late 2000s, mainly in English-speaking countries such as South Africa and Kenya. One of the pioneers of incubation in West Africa was the American group Meltwater, which established its first incubator – MEST - in Ghana in 2008 with the firm intention of supporting a new generation of entrepreneurs. Ten years later, MEST now boasts offices in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire. In 2010, Co-Creation Hub (commonly referred to as Cc-Hub) was founded in Lagos, Nigeria, to help technology enthusiasts realize their ideas for solving social and environmental issues. In 2016, the Cc-Hub even hosted Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook.

In francophone West Africa, the first incubator opened in Dakar, Senegal in 2011. Supported by the World Bank's InfoDev program, CTIC Dakar proposes a new governance model that brings together private, public and institutional actors. Having proven its value and success, the model was replicated and adapted three years later in Niger with the creation of CIPMEN, which has also assisted the emergence of two new support structures in Mali (Createam) in 2015 and Guinea (Saboutech) in 2016.

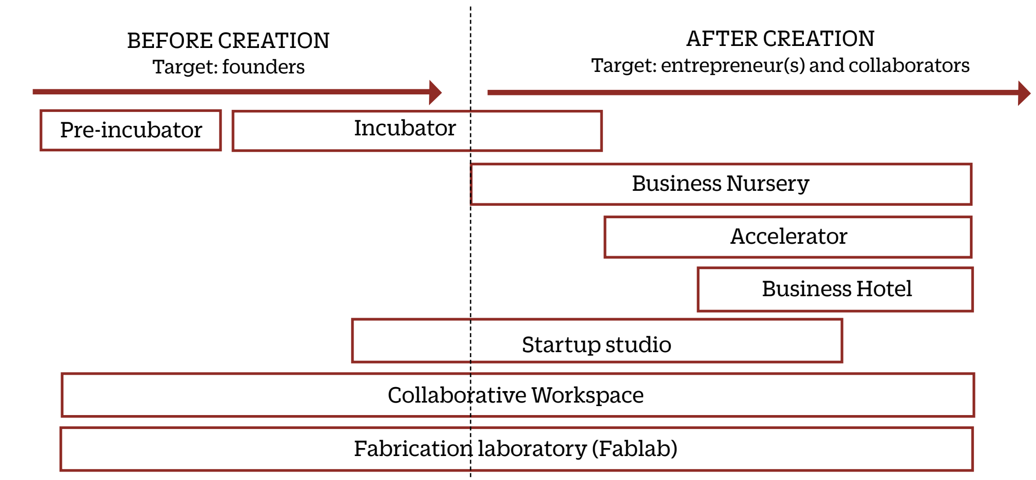
Today, West Africa has more than one hundred support structures and initiatives are multiplying to pave the way for the emergence of more and more entrepreneurs.

In a dynamic and innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem, however, it is also important to differentiate between support structures and understand their target audience, as well as their objectives and value proposition.

1.1. Differentiating support structures

Support structures aim to support and guide those who need advice on how to structure their ideas and transform them into viable businesses. These services can apply to companies at any stage of maturity – from newly-formed teams seeking to move past the ideation phase, a startup or even well-structured businesses looking to accelerate their growth.

Figure 6. Theoretical positioning of entrepreneurship support structures



Source: Elodie Hanff. 2018. Discover the services offered by the Support Structures for innovative entrepreneurship. Bondy: Afric'innov[27].

In theory, pre-incubators are the support structures that target people who have a business idea and intend to create a company but who haven't taken action yet. In an incubator and a startup studio, the purpose is to help the founder of a company evolve and advance to being a real entrepreneur in action. Once their business is up and running, the seasoned entrepreneur can join a business nursery, accelerator or business hotel to address the needs of their maturing startup. Third places, such as collaborative spaces (innovation spaces, coworking spaces, Fab Labs, etc.), by contrast, are accessible to everyone at any point in the life cycle of their project or company.

BOX 6. OBJECTIVES, TYPICAL SERVICES AND TARGETS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT STRUCTURES

>> Pre-incubators to test ideas
Objective: validate nascent business ideas.
Typical services: hosting and mentoring to help young business founders "learn to be entrepreneurs" and test their ideas via business advice and other support services.
Target audience: people with business ideas who have yet to establish their company.

>> Incubators to innovate
Objective: support the key "gestation" phase of new innovative businesses and startups i.e. businesses that require maturation prior to the marketing phase and that often have significant development potential (income, employment, impact, etc.)
Typical services: providing business advice and other personalized support, including the provision of office space, training, seed funding and assistance to innovate.
Target audience: entrepreneurs whose company is not yet established or is very young. Eligibility is often dependent on incubators' own economic, thematic or innovation characteristics.

>> Accelerators for business development and financial support
Objective: support business development and raise funds.
Typical services: providing short and intense training programs (3 to 6 months) in cohorts to accelerate the commercial and financial development of companies, while promoting direct access to a network and investors/financing.
Target audience: young but already established and competitive companies.

>> Business nurseries to grow at a comfortable pace
Objective: provide a stimulating environment conducive to the development of a business, at an affordable price, for a limited period of time (3 to 5 years).
Typical services: shared costs, friendly places conducive to exchanges and networking; optional services include consulting, training and other shared services.
Target audience: active companies.

>> Co-working spaces and collaborative workspaces: focusing without being isolated
Objective: offer a shared work space, with a focus on exchanging ideas and conviviality to foster collaboration and inspiration.
Typical services: office rental (open or private), shared services; optional services include access to networks and events.
Target audience: independent entrepreneurs, people working remotely, consultants, SMEs (small teams), artists, etc.

>> Business hotels for businesses to evolve in a favorable environment
Objective: hosting companies in an environment of mutual learning and the exchange of ideas (for unlimited durations).
Typical services: providing equipped and secure spaces to work, pooling activities and services under one roof (e.g. storage, reception, etc.), tax assistance and local banking, etc.
Target audience: established companies.

>> Fab Labs to innovate in a collaborative way
Objective: open spaces to facilitate collaboration and frugal innovation through design and manufacturing.
Typical services: providing equipment and software, as well as training.
Target audience: open to anyone

>> Startup studios to build and support startups seeking to become independent within a few months
Objective: help startups grow by providing human and financial capital. In exchange for these contributions, the studio takes a share, often majority, in their young incubee companies.
Typical services: providing technical, human, financial and legal know-how and resources. The studio is in charge of the whole process: definition of the concept, financing, recruitment of teams (including managers and co-founders), development, scaling and, where applicable, partial or total exit.
Target audience: founders of startups at the ideation phase.

Besides differentiating these support structures by their target audience, we can also categorize support structure according to the services they provide:

1. Structures with a strong dose of personalized support: incubators, accelerators and startups studios;
2. Shared structures offering services to companies: nurseries and business hotels;
3. "Third place" type structures: open spaces favoring the exchange of ideas, skills and resources for entrepreneurs and/or innovators.

1.2. Understanding various value propositions

Each support structure deploys a range of tailor-made services according to its objectives, human, technical and financial means, as well as target audience and network. In the field, there are as many existing services as support structures providing them. Key services are presented below and categorized by support structure. It should be noted that the frequency and quality of services should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Indeed they vary significantly depending on the support structure's experience and maturity.

Figure 7. Flagship services offered by support structures

	Pre-incubator	Incubator	Accelerator	Business Nursery	Co-working space	Business Hotel	Fab Lab	Startup Studio
Space rental		**✓**	✓	**✓**	**✓**	**✓**	✓	✓
Advice	✓	**✓**	**✓**	✓			✓	**✓**
Training	**✓**	**✓**	✓	✓			**✓**	**✓**
Prototyping	**✓**	**✓**	✓				**✓**	**✓**
Event	✓	**✓**	**✓**	✓	**✓**	✓	✓	✓
Networking	✓	**✓**	**✓**	✓	**✓**		✓	✓
Investment readiness	✓	✓	**✓**					**✓**

Caption:
✓: key service
✓: optional service

Source: Elodie Hanff. 2018. Discover the services offered by the Support Structures for innovative entrepreneurship. Bondy: Afric'innov.

Incubators without a doubt represent the support structures that offer the widest range of services to businesses at the early stage. This phase is often fraught with pitfalls and therefore the stage where founders and teams have the strongest need for advice and services. In general, an incubator is expected to offer personalized advice, an equipped premises, access to a network of ecosystem actors and support to secure funding through investment-readiness services. These services are detailed below and provide a more detailed understanding of incubators.

Figure 8. Flagship services expected of incubators

ADVICE Training, individualized follow-up, mentoring, coaching, master classes, workshop	**NETWORK** Community of entrepreneurs and experts, events, BtoB meetings, experience sharing
FACILITIY Offices, meeting rooms, Internet, laboratories, equipment	**FUNDING** Support for financial arrangements, support for fundraising, interest-free loans

>> ADVICE

Personal or collective support is an important incubator activity designed to help entrepreneurs succeed in their business venture and avoid the classic pitfalls. This support can take various forms (training, master classes, workshops, mentoring, etc.) but must above all allow founders to develop essential skills in legal, commercial, marketing and financial matters. An entrepreneur must learn to master all these components if their business is to succeed. Once the business is up and running and the entrepreneur is somewhat seasoned, advice is then geared towards business development and/or fundraising.

>> WORK SPACE

Entrepreneurs need a conducive and affordable place to work, furnished and equipped with a good and reliable Internet connection, meeting rooms and basic office equipment.

More than just physical space, incubators provide a place of mutual learning for founders, new startups and businesses. It is in environments such as these that business startup ecosystems are built. Young entrepreneurs come together to work, exchange and collaborate, while big companies discover innovators and investors identify businesses with potential.

>> NETWORK

In the life of an entrepreneur, meeting potential customers, identifying experts and partners and sharing each other's' experiences is a vital part of the journey. Incubators are helping a growing number of entrepreneurs expand their network by organizing events such as innovation contests, pitch competitions, hackathons, seminars, BtoB meetings, etc. All of these represent opportunities for entrepreneurs to build their network and increase their visibility.

At events like these, budding entrepreneurs discover the universe of entrepreneurship for the first time. Sometimes they meet their future co-founders, develop a new business idea and meet mentors who will follow their progress and advise them in crucial decisions they will make for their startup. These events also raise awareness about innovative entrepreneurship and can spark people's interest and desire to start their own business.

>> SUPPORT FOR FUNDING

Another important and vital expectation entrepreneurs have of incubators is to help them secure financing for their ventures. This often represents the greatest obstacle for entrepreneurs, particularly at the beginning of their journey (i.e. before being able to realize their first turnover). This challenge is only reinforced in the field of innovation, which is synonymous with potential, of course, but also with risk. Furthermore, this challenge is even greater in Africa because the ecosystems for seed funding are often lacking.

Incubators therefore act as intermediaries. They support entrepreneurs in their search for funds from banks or investment funds, helping them to build their profiles in order to make them investment-ready in order to give them every chance of success. At times, incubators also support and even physically accompany clients during appointments and negotiations to secure financing.

1.3. Making the right choice as an entrepreneur

Over the course of their journey, entrepreneurs can benefit from the services of one or more support structures depending on their needs and what is available in their local ecosystem.

In order to benefit from these services, startups generally start by submitting an application to the support structure. Admission requirements, of course, are specific to each individual structure. Admission to an incubator can be decided on purely economic and financial grounds, the ability to rent an office space for example, or based on mixed criteria such as innovation, job creation potential, maturity of the startup in question, etc.

For third place type structures, admission criteria tend to be more flexible and are limited to a charter affirming the values and collaborative rules.

Driven by both their mission and economic model, most support structures primarily seek clients that are:

- Attractive: in terms of their value proposition on the market and the skill profile of the startup to be incubated;
- Innovative: in terms of products, services or management;
- Impactful: in terms of value creation, as well as social and environmental benefits

Just as no two support structures are the same, each entrepreneur has a unique business idea. It takes time to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of joining a particular structure, depending on the entrepreneur's needs and the services they can access. In return, support structures also reserve the right to be selective in order to maximize their success rate.

Many support structures in West Africa combine several services, such as:

- An incubator and a coworking space;
- An incubator and an accelerator;
- An incubator and a business nursery;
- A coworking space and a Fab Lab.

Entrepreneur can and often do benefit from these combined services. Support structures, meanwhile, must not only meet the needs of their local ecosystems, but also find a sustainable and profitable economic model to ensure their viability. It should also be noted that support structures can be generalist, meaning they support any type of business, or specialize in certain themes (ICT or climate change, for example) or a specific target audience.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
Pre-incubator, incubator, accelerator, business nursery, business hotel, Fab Labs, coworking space, startup studio: these are terms that describe different types of entrepreneurship support structures. They respond to the ecosystem in which they operate, each with a unique position within the ecosystem and differentiated services available to entrepreneurs.	Support structures offer a wide range of services to support entrepreneurs in their development. Incubators are expected to provide early-stage business founders and startups with advice, facilities and access to a network and funding. Third places offer open spaces for entrepreneurs to innovate and share knowledge and ideas.	In West Africa, support structures first began operating in the early 2000s, addressing some shortcomings in entrepreneurial ecosystems. These structures have also met the needs of local economies by fostering the emergence of successful and innovative businesses to stimulate the market and create jobs.

2. ECONOMIC AND LEGAL MODELS UNDERPINNING SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Providing quality coaching services to entrepreneurs is expensive. A support structure's staff is its first resource and a prerequisite for success, though of course, employees also represent a major cost to the organization. Along with rent for office space and other infrastructure to host incubees, equipment, Internet and mobile connection and electricity, up-front costs can be especially high for support structures operating in immature ecosystems like West Africa's. The most successful incubators employ an average of 5 to 10 people and a manager that generally supports 2 to 6 entrepreneurs simultaneously. Occasional key support actors can also be added to these permanent teams, including experts, mentors, consultants and trainers.

Support structures, much like the businesses they support, must secure funding and balance their budget every year. It is therefore not just startup clients that can fail, but the support structures hosting and incubating them too. Many support structures have declared bankruptcy due to a lack of resources and other challenges.

In light of these financial obstacles facing support structures in West Africa and their difficult operating environment, which economic models are the most viable? Which legal status is the most suitable? Many potential models have emerged to date and each support structure defines its economic model and legal regime according to its context and ambitions – these are explored below.

2.1. Innovative business models

Support structures are constantly seeking financial stability. They must therefore find an economic model that ensures their development, growth and sustainability. The major challenge is that they have great difficulty in financing themselves via their direct clients - entrepreneurs who often lack the means to cover the basic costs of receiving incubation services.

There is no catch-all formula and, as with any business, profits are not immediate for support structures. Indeed, it takes several years for initial investments in and other services provided to client entrepreneurs to pay off for support structures.

Depending on the type of revenue they seek, support structures can opt for private, public or mixed models.

>> The private model: revenue in this model is primarily secured from client entrepreneurs that may benefit from incubation services or may already operate in the ecosystem. Fees may include:

- Rent for office space and other forms of accommodation;
- Compensation for services provided to entrepreneurs;
- Value-added services: expertise, consulting, training, organization of events, etc.

A new source of funding that has emerged in West Africa is equity stakes in incubees. Another option is percentage charges on beneficiaries' turnover growth. These types of investment represent win-win partnerships for support structures and beneficiaries alike. As the startups under support structures' tutelage grow, their sponsoring incubator receives some of the benefits of this growth. In the case of capital acquisition (which is always minority shares), support structures normally have sufficient funds and can survive without so-called "fresh money" (money that has not already been invested).

>>The associative model: depending on the structure in question, services offered to startups and businesses under this model can range from pro bono to specialized pricing. Subsidized services can be the result of:

- Major international donor support to economic development of the global South (e.g. the World Bank's infoDev initiative, the French Development Agency (AFD)'s Afric'innov program, the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF)'s Entrepreneurship Support Program, USAID's Partnering to Accelerate Entrepreneurship – PACE – initiative and the African Development Bank (AfDB) and European Investment Bank (EIB)'s Boost Africa program)
- Private donors: corporate support to incubators as part of their corporate social responsibility (e.g. Orange) and/or as part of skills sponsorship programs (e.g. Deloitte)
- University budgets: for training and research purposes (e.g. 2iE in Burkina Faso, IAM in Senegal)
- Less common: local authority initiatives (e.g. the city of Abomey-Calavi subsidizes the UAC Startup Valley incubator in Benin and 3 other Beninese cities have provided it with land).

>> The mixed model: As discussed earlier, client entrepreneurs are often not particularly creditworthy and are therefore considered inherently risky. Since subsidies are rare, uncertain and generally limited in time, the mixed model tends to be the most widespread among support structures in West Africa, combining revenue sources from both the private and public models.

In the West African context, a number of support structure founders and managers, particularly in incubators, feel their organizations cannot be profitable and instead consider their purpose to be more closely aligned with not-for-profits and NGOs. Many in fact view their mission as one of public service, rather than to generate revenue or profits. Such incubators are therefore constantly seeking financial partners to support their activities as well as limit their risk profile via a diversified business model and fee-based services.

Figure 9. Possible revenue generation sources for a support structure

TYPE OF SUPPORT STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE OF POSSIBLE SOURCE OF REVENUE	CHARACTERISTICS
Coworking space	Rental of equipped workspaces: office space and/or meeting rooms	Costs are determined by: • period and frequency of use (day, week, month, quarter, etc.) • position: open space or enclosed space • associated services: administrative support, access to computers, Wi-Fi connection and printing, other documentation and organized events, etc.
Incubator	Mentor support	The cost will be determined by: • frequency of meetings • mentors' expertise • experts' location, etc. Financing can be covered by client entrepreneur, however early-stage entrepreneurs rarely have the financial means to pay for such services themselves. Mentors therefore occasionally provide their services pro bono, though generally incubators will have identified partners to fund this service.
	Percentage charge on beneficiary companies' turnover	Incubators' revenue is determined by that of the businesses they support. When growth is zero, the incubator takes nothing.
Accelerator	Equity investment in the startup	Investment is based on: • value of the startup at the time of the deal • percentage of shares negotiated In all cases, the entrepreneur remains the majority shareholder. The accelerator will be able to sell its shares later and value its investment (or not) according to the startup's performance on the market.

2.2. Diversified legal statutes

Another strategic point which determines support structures' operating conditions is their legal status. Remember: everything is possible! A support structure can be:

- Created by one person or several founders
- An extension of a larger organization: university, research center, NGO, school, local authority (rarer in West Africa)

The legal form of a support structure can therefore be:

- Public
- Private
- Public/private

All types of support structures can be found throughout West Africa, though the most common legal form is associative non-profit.

BOX 7. FOCUS ON SUPPORT STRUCTURE GOVERNANCE

>> Joint governance: the incubator CTIC Dakar was created in Senegal in 2011. Thanks to its unique governance structure that includes Senegalese public institutions, trade associations and large private groups (such as Orange), CTIC was able to play a crucial role in kickstarting the Senegalese digital ecosystem. Following the success of this model, along with the strong support of Orange, the CIPMEN incubator was established in Niger in 2013, along with Createam in Mali in 2015 and Saboutech in Guinea in 2016.
Note: Despite their presence on the steering committee, there is no interference by public authorities in the operational management of CTIC Dakar.

>> Private governance: the Meltwater School of Technology (MEST) was established in 2008 to raise awareness on coding and transform young Ghanaians into software creators. The MEST model is one of intensive training in coding and countless training sessions on entrepreneurship in partnership with experts from around the world. MEST is 100% private, as the incubator is funded entirely by the American multinational Meltwater, which has opened its international network to young Ghanaian entrepreneurs. Building on its success, MEST now has also opened offices in South Africa and Nigeria.
Note: this model of governance is the most widespread in West Africa, whether implemented by civil society organizations or private actors. The results depend largely on the human and financial resources of individual incubators.

>> Public governance: The PIPHE-SA, literally translated as "project to create and set up incubators, business nurseries and business hotels in the agribusiness sector", was launched in 2017 by the government of Burkina Faso. It is managed by the public Agency for Financing and Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (AFP-SME), under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Crafts. PIPHE-SA's ambition is to support entrepreneurs in the agribusiness sector in order to relieve them of the constraints they face, including the high cost of factors of production and difficulty in accessing technology, financing and markets. This public support structure is in line with the objectives of the Burkinabe government's National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES), specifically "boosting growth sectors for the economy and jobs" and "developing an industrial and craft sector that is competitive, with high added-value and a source of decent jobs."
Note: Most of the 100% public models introduced in the West African region have failed or have not yet produced significant results. Their position in the ecosystem and political orientation, increased levels of bureaucracy, as well as management teams composed primarily of civil servants often unfamiliar with the private sector, are all factors that may have contributed to these failures.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
There is a wide variety of possible governance models and legal status for support structures. In West Africa, the associative non-profit model is the most common.	Support structures must be innovative to sustain their economic model. This is primarily because their startup and entrepreneur clients are often unable to pay (at least in full) for the services they need.	The definition of their economic model depends on the support structure in question, as well as their position in the ecosystem. There are many possible sources of revenue for these structures, that can evolve over time. Like any business, knowing your market is essential before embarking. Many structures that have not yet developed the right business model are failing.

3. Specialized support structures

Support structures can be generalist in nature, meaning they promote all types of entrepreneurship across all sectors. Increasingly, however, they tend to specialize in:

- **A particular target customer segment:** women, young people, higher education graduates, etc.
- **A sector:** agribusiness, health, tech, etc.
- **A theme:** promoting social entrepreneurship, combating climate change, etc.

Specialization allows support structures to better tailor programs that meet their beneficiaries' specific needs. Specialized services also allow support structures to mobilize other ecosystem partners that are invested in the same issues, thereby forming or strengthening networks of experts in certain sectors or topics. Finally, when it comes to product innovation, it is necessary for support structures to invest in laboratories or identify partners who could make their equipment available to prototype and test beneficiaries' products, so specializing by theme allows support structures to more effectively mobilize and share resources where possible.

3.1. Supporting digital growth

Growth in mobile usage in Africa has been spectacular, with the fastest mobile penetration in the world (0% in 2000 and 75% in 2016; 350 million smartphones on the continent[7]). Progress on some online services, such as mobile phone payments, has also been impressive (122 million active accounts in sub-Saharan Africa and 57 million accounts in West Africa). These services, especially those relating to mobile money, continue to grow rapidly in West Africa. The number of registered accounts associated with mobile financial services in the region reached 104.5 million in 2017, an increase of 20.9% compared to 2016[16]. As communications technology takes off in the continent, so do the startups and tech companies underpinning this growth. Many of these multiplying and expanding businesses have been supported by incubators.

In West Africa, innovation support structures have been at the forefront of assisting ICT and mobile technology entrepreneurs as they create value. New solutions are already emerging in the areas of agriculture, health, trade, banking and education, often with a strong impact, as the box below lays out.

BOX 8. EXAMPLES OF STARTUPS BASED ON DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

E Health
Djantoli (Mali and Burkina Faso): Remote monitoring of children's health, via intermediaries and the use of a dedicated mobile application to create an electronic health record for data collection that can be transmitted to nurses and doctors.

E-agriculture
Esoko (Ghana): Provides farmers with access to new technologies and facilitates their financial inclusion to improve their productivity. Esoko deploys web and mobile tools, including a communication platform (SMS and voice messaging) to help farmers better manage their operations.

E-commerce
Coin Afrique (Francophone Africa): A simple and free platform for web and mobile classified ads to connect buyers and sellers, whether private or professional, to buy and sell new and used products.

E-education
Prepclass (Nigeria): A platform for connecting students and teachers. Teacher profiles are studied and validated by the startup, offering teachers an additional source of income while guaranteeing students high-quality academic support.

BOX 9. EXAMPLES OF ICT SUPPORT STRUCTURES

- **Etrlilabs** in Benin
- **IDEA** in Nigeria
- **MEST** in Ghana

3.2 Contributing to fintech development

Fintech applies new technologies to the field of finance. The sector is expected to grow considerably across the continent in the coming years to nearly $3 billion by 2020 compared to $200 million today[28].

According to Bill Gates, by 2030 two billion people worldwide will use their mobile phone to save and borrow money and make payments[29]. In Africa, mobile phones have become a powerful tool for financial inclusion. The continent is ahead in developing its financial technology sector compared to other parts of the world, with around 100 million e-wallet users today. Indeed, Africans account for more than half (57.6%) of all mobile wallets in the world[28].

M-PESA, Africa's fintech pioneer

The story of fintech in Africa started in 2007 with the launch of M-Pesa, a mobile phone payment and money transfer service introduced by the Kenyan mobile operator Safaricom. It was the first time a telecommunications company relied on its own network and infrastructure to allow customers to exchange money without going through a bank. Today, 75 percent of Kenyan adults pay all their bills directly via the M-Pesa app, including school tuition, electricity bills and even taxi fare[29]. According to Safaricom, M-Pesa has generated some 860,000 jobs and about $1 billion in economic activity, as well as contributing 6.5% of Kenya's GDP[30]. The success of M-Pesa is now a major case study, with all major operators on the continent quickly following suit.

Thanks to fintech companies, the mobile phone has become a formidable vehicle of financial and social inclusion. Even without banking infrastructure, in the depths of the countryside, armed only with a mobile phone, it is now possible to receive money, make payments and access services across all sectors like agriculture, health, education, etc. African startups specializing in fintech are deploying digital tools to create credit profiles for the formerly "unbanked," as well as provide electricity to rural households and even use artificial intelligence to diagnose health problems remotely.

BOX 10. EXAMPLES OF FINTECH STARTUPS

Afrimarket (from France to Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal): Offers the first "cash-to-goods" transfer solution, i.e. the use of advanced technology for the African diaspora, allowing them to directly pay relatives' health, education and food needs in Africa from abroad, via a voucher system.

Mamamoni (Nigeria): A startup selected as part of Tony Elumelu Foundation Programme in 2015 for its web platform which enables socially conscious individuals to lend money to poor women to develop their businesses, thereby empowering over 4,000 women and generating over $43,000 in revenue.

BitPesa (DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda): A digital platform for money transfers that leverages blockchain technology to reduce costs and accelerate business payments to and from African markets.

MaTontine (Senegal): A digital platform for financial services, MaTontine innovates by digitizing traditional savings systems (tontines). Allowing users to build credit scores over time, the startup facilitates access other financial services, such as small loans and insurance.

Few support structures specialize exclusively in the fintech sector, nevertheless those structures dedicated to digital technology often support fintech startups. Moreover, an increasing number of banks are interested in fintech startups, especially in light of their tools for financial inclusion, as banking levels remain low in West Africa - estimated at just 15% of the population, with significant regional disparities[31]. In order to develop closer relationships with these startups and/or to encourage their emergence, banks have asked incubators to set up dedicated programs in this sector (see concrete examples in annexes 15 and 16).

BOX 11. EXAMPLES OF FINTECH SUPPORT STRUCTURES

- **Africa Fintech Foundry** in Nigeria;
- **Paxful blockchain incubator hub** in Nigeria.

Behind the dynamism of African fintech are venture capital actors who are determined to take advantage of this new windfall. Financial inclusion accounted for 45% of investments made in Africa in 2017 by venture capitalists, with fintech accounting for 21% of the total funding ($1118 million)[4].

3.3. Promoting green startup development

Sub-Saharan Africa will have 2.5 billion inhabitants by 2050, nearly three times the current population[32]. The figures are particularly striking in the case of Nigeria: by 2050, its population is expected to reach 400 million, which will make Nigeria the fourth most populous country in the world[33], exceeding that even of the United States.

This demographic growth will also bring major challenges for policymakers and other economic stakeholders, particularly in the field of the environment. These challenges include putting in place the right conditions for sustainable agriculture, finding solutions for waste recycling and sanitation in cities and providing access to clean energy to as many people as possible.

In the energy sector in particular, demand is skyrocketing as an African middle class with new energy needs emerges. West Africa's electrification rate is still the lowest in the world (the rate of access to electricity in the ECOWAS region is less than 40% with an average of just 8% in rural areas[34]). Despite an energy production growth of 70% in the last ten years, two-thirds of which is renewable, investment still needs to increase ten-fold in order to meet unsatisfied demand and generate future growth. At the current pace, 50% of the African population will still be without electricity by 2030[7].

In light of this, more and more African entrepreneurs are mobilizing to provide green solutions to resolve environmental challenges. As a result, some support structures are focusing on businesses with high environmental impact but whose technical needs often involve large resources to invest in R&D and expertise.

BOX 12. EXAMPLES OF GREEN STARTUPS

BioPhytoCollines (Benin): This company promotes responsible agriculture through the production and marketing of 100% natural organic fertilizers and bio-pesticides.

Clean Team (Ghana): Renting mobile toilets to low-income families who are not connected to sewers and/or have no septic tanks. Households pay weekly and their waste is collected once per week in sealed containers.

Global Lumos (Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria): Off-grid solar energy provider, offering homes and small businesses a simple and affordable way to pay for solar energy in small instalments (pay as you go) by partnering with mobile operators.

Recycle Points (Nigeria): A startup selected as part of Tony Elumelu Foundation Programme in 2015 for its point-based incentive model to collect recyclables directly from 7,500 registered consumers, which in exchange get rewarded with points that when accrued can be used to redeem household items or cash.

Coliba (Côte d'Ivoire): Smart technological solution for households to collect plastic waste, that the startup then transforms into products such as school kits, given to the household clients in exchange for their waste.

BOX 13. EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR GREEN STARTUPS

- **2iE** in Burkina Faso
- **Climate Innovation Center** in Ghana
- **Energy Generation** in Togo

BOX 14. FOCUS ON THE CLIMATE INNOVATION CENTER (CIC) IN GHANA

The Climate Innovation Center (CIC) in Ghana is one of the world's eight climate change centers under the World Bank Group's Climate Technology Program.

Launched in 2015, the CIC is run by a consortium including Ashesi University College, Ernst and Young, SNV and the United Nations University. It is an incubator promoting business development for the green economy, seeking to identify and support pioneer entrepreneurs as they develop their adaptive and mitigation solutions to climate change issues in Ghana.

The CIC's five thematic areas are:
- Solar energy
- Energy efficiency
- Waste management
- Climate smart agriculture
- Water management and purification

CIC Ghana offers a complete range of services: consulting, training, market development support, access to facilities to test innovative solutions, as well as seed funding to validate proof of concept.

CIC Ghana also acts as a national focal point, coordinating local efforts to promote green solutions to combat climate change.

3.4. Encouraging social entrepreneurship

Many West African countries rank among the poorest in the world. While international aid focuses primarily on emergencies and support for major structural investment programs, small local economic initiatives that can provide solutions to social needs are struggling to find support.

Nevertheless, West Africa's circumstances can be interpreted not only in terms of constraints but also as opportunities for frugal innovation, that is innovations that require little means to be developed and implemented, and that could easily be exported outside their original local markets and even to developed countries. This is the purpose and philosophy of social entrepreneurs.

A social enterprise is a company whose objectives are twofold: to be profitable and to achieve the social mission it has set for itself. While the concept of "social entrepreneurship" is widespread in other regions including Europe, it is still too often ignored in West Africa. Nevertheless, the region's entrepreneurial spirit is beginning to show itself and many West African entrepreneurs are already seeking to resolve the social and environmental problems in their communities. Suffice to say that social entrepreneurship is a worthy venture in West Africa.

However, it is not so simple to combine a business with the intention to deliver a societal good, particularly in countries with little resource-consumption or limited available resources locally. Moreover, the economic imperative to go to scale and ensure sustainability of the business model does not always align with fulfilling a social mission. Supporting these social entrepreneurs and structuring their ecosystem so that it is conducive to their development is therefore extremely important.

BOX 15. EXAMPLES OF STARTUPS WITH A STRONG SOCIAL IMPACT

Energy:
Pad-UP Creations (Nigeria): A startup selected as part of Tony Elumelu Foundation Programme in 2016 for its social enterprise devoted towards manufacturing affordable, eco-friendly, washable and reusable sanitary pads for over 40,000 Nigerian girls in rural areas who do not have the means to buy disposable pads.

Health:
NEST (Senegal): Senegalese medical network made up of pediatric and maternity units, offering complete monitoring services to women and young children. The company offers quality services at moderate prices and therefore primarily targets middle class clients. The service model focuses on welcoming and listening to patients.

TINKISSO (Guinea): Social enterprise driven by the NGO Antenna specializing in local production of chlorinated disinfectant bottles, thereby providing a cheaper means of drinking clean water at home.

Education:
ENKO Education (pan-African): International school group seeking to structure one of the largest networks of private high schools in sub-Saharan Africa, paying particular attention to Francophone African countries. Enko provides access to a renowned and high-quality training platform in order to facilitate access to international universities. This service primarily targets middle-class and upper middle-class clients, with a competitive position compared to international high schools in Africa (Enko's model allows for splitting tuition fees into quarterly segments).

SolarPak (Côte d'Ivoire): To compensate for the lack of electricity in rural areas of Côte d'Ivoire, SolarPak has created and marketed backpacks equipped with solar panels, which can power a lamp to keep studying once night falls.

BOX 16. EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES DEDICATED TO SOCIAL IMPACT

- **Co-Creation-Hub** in Nigeria
- **La Fabrique** in Burkina Faso
- **Makesense** in Senegal

3.5. Stimulating agricultural and agribusiness entrepreneurship

Agriculture is particularly strategic on the African continent, representing on average 65% of jobs (200 million farmers[7]) and 35% of GDP. African agriculture has not always been of interest to entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, a new dynamic is emerging, due to a growing aspiration to return to farming, combined with a rebalancing of agricultural policy (particularly since the 2008 food riots[7]).

Entrepreneurs are increasingly seeing business opportunities in agriculture and imagining new business models to start their ventures. However, the challenges associated with agribusiness enterprises are numerous relative to other sectors (climate change, seasonal supply, regulatory risks, market risks, land rights, etc.) and can undermine business sustainability. Removing these constraints and addressing the specific challenges facing the agricultural and food sectors are therefore essential. Not surprisingly, some support structures have chosen to specialize their services and expertise in these sectors.
There are different types of agribusiness incubator models: those linked to research and universities, those incorporating stakeholders across a value chain, those focused on technology transfer, etc. Each incubator has its own strategy and governance model.

Note that entrepreneurs operating in the agribusiness sector need specific technical skills. Concepts such as value chains, certifications, regulations, standards and traceability are specific to these companies and therefore require tailored support. Moreover, agricultural and food businesses have particular budgetary and financial constraints, particularly due to the seasonality of their supply and production cycles. Financing these businesses hence requires the use of appropriate solutions.

BOX 17. EXAMPLES OF AGRIBUSINESS STARTUPS

FasoPro (Burkina Faso): Develops consumer products based on African insects, specifically caterpillars and locusts. From collection to point of sale, the company structures an entire sector and market for healthy and nutritious products.

Le Fermier du Denguelé de Côte d'Ivoire (FDCI) (Côte d'Ivoire): Through its agro-industrial production of eggs and especially day-old chicks and mixed feeds, FDCI is a real driving force in the development of high-quality poultry farming in north-western Côte d'Ivoire.

Tropingo foods (The Gambia): A startup selected as part of Tony Elumelu Foundation Programme in 2015 for its light process (dehydration) that adds value to fruits which would otherwise have been wasted due to lack of processing facilities in The Gambia, thereby creating a ready market for local farmers to serve the growing dried fruit international market.

Bayseddo (Senegal): A digital platform that connects farmers who have land and need funding to potential private investors interested in buying agricultural shares with limited duration.

BOX 18. EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES TO NASCENT AGRIBUSINESSES

- **MBCAfrica** in Ghana
- **Wennovation Hub** in Nigeria ("Agri-Tech Incubation program")
- **Yesaal AgriHub** in Senegal

3.6. Promoting women's entrepreneurship

More and more private initiatives to support women entrepreneurship are appearing across the African continent. Generally initiated by support structures or networks of women entrepreneurs, such programs seek to level the playing field in male-dominated sectors, as well as work towards a more inclusive model of entrepreneurship. While many economic studies highlight women's central role in development, the World Bank recently found that the rate of female entrepreneurship is in fact higher in Africa than in any other region of the world. In 2014, 25% of working-age women had started their own business[35]. Despite this, however, the obstacles that push African women into economic marginalization remain numerous and overwhelming[36], including:

- Inequality in schooling outcomes between girls and boys: In Africa, nearly 28 million girls between the ages of 6 and 15 are still deprived of education[37] and the probability of a girl not attending school is 57% higher than for a boy. This gap rises to 83% for high school-aged girls and boys[38];
- Very limited access to capital and assets: Almost 70% of women-owned SMEs in developing countries are excluded from financial institutions or are unable to receive adequate financial services to meet their needs[20]. In Uganda, for example, 38% of registered companies are owned by women but they only benefit from 9% of available financial services. In Kenya, in 2017, meanwhile, 48% of micro and small enterprises led by women receive just 7% of the total granted credits according the World Bank;
- Legal discrimination (in particular in land and inheritance law), which tends to deprive women of the necessary assets for collateral loans, for instance)[39];
- Social norms that push women towards less lucrative sectors or encourage spending more time and money on domestic chores and the health/education of their children or elderly relatives, often at the expense of their own business.

Few know this but many may be surprised to learn: 41% of women in Nigeria are entrepreneurs compared to an estimated 10% of women in the United States[40].

BOX 19. EXAMPLES OF STARTUPS CREATED BY WOMEN

KEA Medicals Pharmaceutics & Technologies (Benin): Arielle Ahouansou, a Beninese doctor, is the creator of the Universal Medical Identity Card (IMU). The KEA Medical platform, available on the Internet and via its mobile application, centralizes a patient's medical information in an online database that is accessible to hospitals and doctors, wherever they are. The users create an account and answers several questions about their medical history, including blood group, allergies, relatives to contact in case of emergency, etc.

ApiAfrique (Senegal): Marina Gning is the creator of the ApiAfrique brand that designs, manufactures and distributes hygienic, healthy, eco-friendly cosmetic products to preserve health, reduce waste and make life easier for women in Senegal and West Africa. To date, available products are reusable sanitary napkins and high-quality washable diapers produced in Senegal.

TalentBase (Nigeria): Chika Uwazie is the founder of TalentBase, which offers African SMEs the opportunity to simplify and organize their human resources strategy and practices using TalentBase's HR management software. The software automates both payroll management and employee performance.

BOX 20. EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES DEDICATED TO WOMEN

- **Innov'up** in Togo
- **iSpace** in Ghana
- **Jjiguene Tech Hub** in Sénégal

3.7. Targeting higher education graduates and researchers

Incubators housed in universities and public research institutions have been gradually growing throughout Africa. Partnering with academic institutions is an opportunity for support structures to transform students and scientists' ideas into high-value, job-creating business ventures, as well as introduce innovation into national economies to strengthen their competitiveness.

Support for young ventures with a strong technological component or breakthrough innovations requires specialized support and resources. In addition to the risk of business creation, there is the risk of innovation, while the time between the conception of a new idea and its commercial feasibility is often longer than in conventional fields with proven pathways to success, because these startups often need to prove their concepts first. This requires developing prototypes, experimenting and testing assumptions in real life and sometimes even educating customers and partners on the changes in consumption or practices their products may induce that are often not self-evident. On the other hand, the return on investment has the potential to be especially important: with a patent that protects its technology, the company may be in a position to operate a monopoly and/or benefit from royalties by granting a portion of their intellectual property.

BOX 21. EXAMPLES OF STARTUPS DEVELOPING PRODUCTS BASED ON RESEARCH

InnoFaso (Burkina Faso): This startup's mission is to make products for the treatment and prevention of malnutrition accessible to the general public. Specifically, InnoFaso produces Plumpy'Nut® in its factories - the first ready-to-use food for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition, which was jointly developed by Nutriset and the IRD research center.

Cycle Farms (Ghana, France): A company specializing in insect-based animal feed. Thanks to its French R&D center and Ghana-based factory, Cycle Farms markets its Cycle Feed products to African fish farmers. In France, Cycle Farms is proposing new technologies to improve insect production yields.

BOX 22. EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES DEDICATED TO HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES AND RESEARCHERS

- **2iE** in Burkina Faso
- **UAC Start-up Valley of the University of Abomey Calavi** in Bénin
- **TD4PAI** in Nigeria

Support structures can also specialize in sectors and themes like culture, tourism, big data, biotechnology, health, media and even e-commerce. First and foremost, the support structure must respond to its target market.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
A support structure can be generalist in nature or specialized in a theme, sector or even target customer segment.	Generalist support structures encourage creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, meeting the broad needs of entrepreneurs, especially at the beginning of their activities.	A support structure's specialization allows it to deploy a range of more sophisticated support instruments and services, by mobilizing experts in the ecosystem around this theme or sector.

PART III

COLLABORATION

COLLABORATING WITH SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN WEST AFRICA: WHY AND HOW?

The purpose of this section is to note the rapid growth of support structures in Africa and analyze this trend, particularly in West Africa. It also lays out some key approaches to evaluating their professionalism on a case-by-case basis and therefore the possibility of collaborating with them. Expectations vary greatly depending on the partner's profile (development agency vs. government agency vs. financial institution) and this section explains what can be expected from a partnership with support structures, as they often have specific characteristics that should be assessed and analyzed from the off-set. Finally, concrete examples of collaboration will be proposed in order to inspire potentially-interested parties to engage.

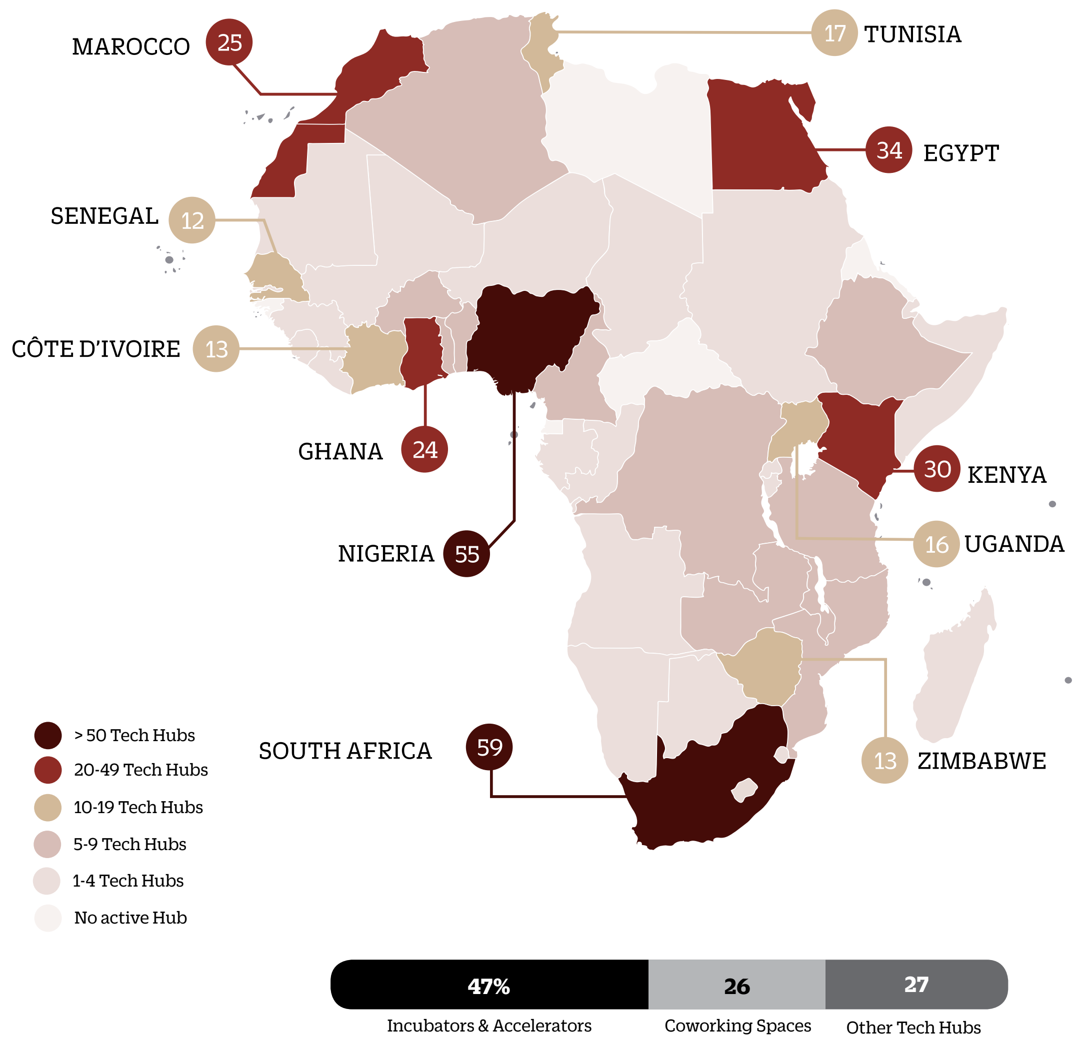
1. IDENTIFYING THE ACTORS THAT SUPPORT GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Before collaborating with incubators, they must first be identified and assessed. In immature ecosystems that are constantly evolving, however, this is no easy feat. The number of support structures has fluctuated rapidly (some are being created while others are failing/shutting down). The positioning of incubators is in constant flux (specialization by sector, region, type of support, etc.). Moreover, support structures have varying degrees of maturity from one incubator to the next. How then do we identify, categorize and evaluate support structures in order to foster productive collaborations between support structures and possible partners?

1.1. The African outlook

The evidence is clear: support structures are growing in number on the continent and are present in almost all African countries. In 2018, the GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator program (which represents almost 800 mobile operators and phone manufacturers in 220 countries worldwide) counted 442 on the African continent[6], most of which are incubator-type structures, accelerators (47%) and coworking spaces (26%). This study evaluated the physical spaces that encourage and support technology startups, namely incubators, accelerators, coworking spaces, Fab Labs, makerspaces, hackerspaces and other innovation centers. The study placed emphasis on the actors who have had an active digital communication campaign in the last 6 months (social media, websites, news, etc.). One remarkable fact that emerged from this study: the current number of African support structures represents an increase of 40% compared to 2016, where GSMA recorded 314 support structures.

Figure 10. Overview of support structures in Africa in 2018



BOX 23. KEY TRENDS IN AFRICA

>> Top 5 African cities that host the highest number of tech hubs:
Lagos: 31
Cape Town: 26
Nairobi: 25
Cairo: 23
Accra: 16

>> Top 5 fastest-growing ecosystems (2016-2018):
DRC: + 200%
Zambia: + 200%
Côte d'Ivoire: + 160%
Togo: + 150%
Nigeria: + 139%

>> Top 5 African countries accounting for more than 45% of all hubs across Africa:
South Africa
Nigeria
Egypt
Kenya
Morocco

>> Highlights:
The average age of an African tech hub is 5 years. 13% of African tech hubs have existing partnerships with a mobile operator.

Source: GSMA[6]

This trend is a direct consequence of young people's growing interest in the private sector and, more specifically, in entrepreneurship. This new positing of young people on the job market has generated a new need for support that therefore requires new services and support mechanisms. This is the gap support structures are attempting to fill.

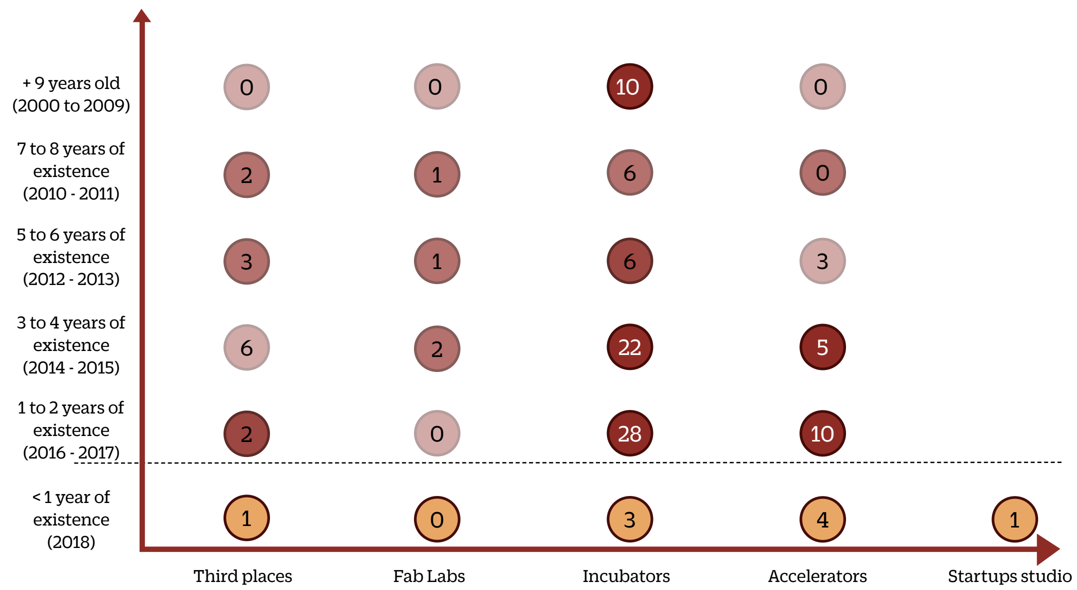
It should be noted that there is currently no organization that comprehensively documents and lists support structures in Africa. Indeed, the diversity of the sector and of national ecosystems is such that this would be a strenuous exercise. Nevertheless, it is possible to find some information on a country-by-country basis, empirically or thanks to centralized structures (e.g. chambers of commerce, national/international networks of support structures, etc.).

1.2. Current trends in West Africa

More and more support structures are emerging across West Africa. A 2018 study of the GSMA's Ecosystem Accelerator program counted 142 active support structures in West Africa in February 2018, compared to 84 in 2016, an increase by nearly 70% in just two years[16]. However, their degree of maturity, capacity to support budding entrepreneurs and positioning within their respective ecosystems vary considerably.

Based on available empirical data, a sample of 100 active support structures in 17 West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo) was gathered to analyze these trends.

Figure 11. Distribution of 100 support structures in West Africa according to their positioning and maturity



It is also important to note that:

1. The West African ecosystem is still young: the average age of these 100 structures is 4 years. Only 7 structures have more than 10 years of experience. Incubators began to emerge in the 2000s, mostly in English-speaking West African countries. Their positioning and value proposition have evolved considerably over time.

2. Incubator-type structures are the most numerous (3 out of 4 structures), but it should also be noted that most of them offer services that can be found in third places (e.g. coworking spaces).

3. Third places represent an even more recent phenomenon and there is still little data on their attractiveness and impact in West Africa.
Note: In this sample, the identified third places actively support entrepreneurship and therefore offer more than just office space to rent but a set of services that are either free or available at preferential rates. Access to a community of entrepreneurial actors is also a feature of this type of support structure.

4. Fab Labs are still very few and there seems to be less enthusiasm for them compared to other types of entrepreneurship spaces. The investment necessary to get their startup beneficiaries off the ground, as well as the skills to use equipment and assist in prototyping products, may prevent this model of support structure from emerging successfully in some countries. Moreover, even for existing Fab Labs, developing a business model that will ensure their sustainability is a challenge.

5. Pre-incubators are difficult to find: even if many support structures play an important role in accompanying new business ventures at the ideation phase – the core activity of pre-incubators - they most often define themselves simply as incubators. Business hotels (sometimes referred to as technological parks, industrial districts, SME areas or technopoles) are also very much lacking in the region, primarily due to the absence of dedicated public investment.

6. Half of the acceleration programs in West Africa are implemented by support structures that also offer incubation services (13 out of the 24 identified structures). Most of these gained some incubation experience before including acceleration for more mature entrepreneurs in their value proposition. It should also be noted that 3 out of 4 accelerators are based in Nigeria or Ghana – the sub-region's most mature ecosystems.

7. It is also important to note that in 2018 the region's first startup studio was founded, based in Abidjan.

There appears to be a certain correlation between the dynamism of a country's economy and the number of support structures they play host to. Not surprisingly, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire are the countries with the most support structures (more than 60% of all structures across the region). While Nigeria accounts for almost three-quarters of ECOWAS' GDP, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal are the two countries in the subregion where growth has been the most sustained (7.8% and 6.8% respectively in 2017, according to World Bank data).

It should also be noted that both these countries are relatively well ranked in the Doing Business 2018 report on the ease of starting a business (Côte d'Ivoire is ranked 44th and Senegal 63rd out of a total of 190 countries)[25].

It is important to emphasize that West African countries are not always the easiest in which to conduct business (Ghana ranked 120th and Chad 180th out of 190 countries in 2018)[24]. Corruption is still very present throughout the sub-region (apart from Cape Verde and Senegal, where the perception of corruption index is lower than the global average according to Transparency International)[41]. It seems quite clear, therefore, that entrepreneurs in the sub-region need all the help they can get as they embark on their journey. The professional structures that help them create, structure and develop their businesses are a good place to start.

1.3. Evaluating existing support structures

Faced with needs that are more and more clearly articulated by entrepreneurs and potential partners support structures are constantly professionalizing and refining their value propositions. In addition, intensifying competition is encouraging these organizations to improve the quality of their services and differentiate themselves.

A certain number of performance criteria can be used to evaluate support structures: results achieved by client entrepreneurs, resources made available to entrepreneurs, ability to evaluate their own performance and evolve, integration with the rest of the ecosystem and relevant networks, etc.

Most support structures have a dedicated website, which makes it possible to identify them and understand their value proposition, as well as sometimes even note their dynamism and results achieved for their clients. They also often make extensive use of social media in order to communicate their ongoing initiatives, future projects and results. Blogs, specialized journals and online media also document and discuss the most active of these structures. Analyzing their digital communication strategies is therefore a good way to evaluate support structures and their appeal to budding entrepreneurs.

BOX 24. FOCUS ON MEST: A CASE STUDY ON COMMUNICATING SUCCESS TO ATTRACT THE BEST

Founded in 2008 in Ghana, MEST is a pan-African, non-profit support structure that provides training and incubation programs as well as investment to African tech entrepreneurs.

Current key figures:
- 4 incubators in Accra (headquarters), Lagos and Cape Town
- Hub management team of 70 people 60 entrepreneurs currently in training
- 40 companies currently in incubation

MEST's impact:
- Entrepreneurs trained: 273
  - -> One-year training in business and digital skills
  - -> High level selection: 6,000 candidates for 60 places per cohort
- Startups funded: 52
  - -> Investments of $50,000 - $250,000 for the best startups who also benefit from incubation services
- Funds invested in MEST: $22.05 million
  - -> $20 million from the MEST Foundation
- Highly-skilled jobs created:
  - o in MEST: +100
  - o in startup: +400
- Network of 400 graduates and former employees

Partners:
Facebook, MTN, Samsung, RwandAir, Vodafone, Interpay, Stripe, Techstars, Amazon web services, Merck, Google Developers, Interswitch

Co-investors: GenKey, Frontier Digital Ventures, 500 startups Startup Chile, Jumia House, Kirusa, Y Combinator.

MEST also plans to open new offices in Nairobi and Abidjan by 2019.

These quantifiable achievements and the quality of MEST's network of partners speak for themselves. By measuring its performance and communicating its results, MEST has successfully attracted the best, whether they are potential entrepreneurs or investors.

>> Read more: www.meltwater.org and consult the case study in Appendix B[14].

Investing in support structures: what kind of impact can we expect?

Support structures' results can be measured by indicators that speak for themselves: number of viable businesses established, jobs created, turnover generated, taxes redistributed, investments raised, etc.

At the macroeconomic level, no study has yet analyzed the impact of support structures on African entrepreneurial ecosystems. However, an analysis by the Connecticut Business Incubator Network[42] found that incubator-type structures represented the "best value for money" to stimulate economic development, thanks to low operating costs and a strong return on investment for communities. In the case of the United States, this return on investment of public investment was calculated at $4.96 for every dollar of public subsidy allocated to incubators.

In sub-Saharan Africa, a study by the Global Accelerator Learning Initiative (GALI)[43] investigated accelerator programs' contributions from a startup perspective. The data of 2,568 startups who applied to one of the 55 Accelerator Partner Programs based in 41 sub-Saharan African countries between 2013 and 2016 was analyzed. The study found that:

- Before acceleration, most startups had generated income (55%) and recruited at least one employee (70%), but very few had already managed to raise funds (11% in sub-Saharan Africa, 8% in West Africa)
- 27% of startups considered direct funding to be the greatest contribution of acceleration programs, followed by access to a network (21%) and business skills development (20%)

Finally, GALI[44] also evaluated the impact of acceleration over a year from a sample of 2,455 startups applying for acceleration programs around the world. The evaluation of the results was compared with those startups that were accelerated and those that were not. To summarize, acceleration has been found to enable increased income generation, job creation and access to investment and financing. The study also highlights differences between developed and emerging countries. Acceleration over a one-year period was not found to foster these benefits in emerging countries, but nevertheless does lead to better access to investment and financing.

Finally, it is important to point out that the support structures available to startups are rather few in any given West African ecosystem. Word of mouth in these countries is often the best method to get an idea of a support structures' reputation. Questioning ecosystem stakeholders remains a relatively reliable way of measuring a structure's level of professionalism. In the medium term, more standardized tools could emerge, such as certifications to signal support services' quality.

BOX 25. FOCUS ON CREATING A CERTIFICATION PROCESS THAT ASSESSES AND SIGNALS SUPPORT SERVICE QUALITY: CASE STUDY: THE CREATION OF THE AFRIC'INNOV CERTIFICATION

>> Context and objectives: The proliferation of support structures on the African continent goes hand in hand with great variation in the quality of the services they offer. At the same time, it is absolutely essential that these structures demonstrate a proven ability to nurture and display the potential of their client entrepreneurs. Indeed, they are now considered the essential link in the entrepreneurial adventure, but they have yet to provide evidence of their effectiveness in these still nascent ecosystems.

In 2017, Afric'innov began to develop a quality certification that:

- Direct entrepreneurs to the best-performing support structures
- Provide a guarantee of quality to the most reliable support structures, allowing them to attract more partners and clients/beneficiaries
- Show that it is possible for support structures to ensure a good quality of service
- Motivate and support younger or less successful support structures to develop their capacity

>> Methodology: Initial research was conducted in collaboration with AFNOR (an organization specializing in standardization and certification) and the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF). It was on this basis that a prototype of the certification was developed.

In order to build the most suitable and agile tool possible, a survey was subsequently conducted among:

- All the support structures in the Afric'innov network
- Entrepreneurs supported by some of these structures
- Some technical and financial partners

>> Status: The evaluation criteria and certification processes are being validated for implementation before the end of 2018.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
In Africa, economic growth goes hand in hand with an increase in support offerings to entrepreneurs. Growth in the number of incubator-type structures has been rapid on the continent (+40% in 2 years), particularly where economies are the most dynamic.	In West Africa, incubator-type structures are by far the most numerous (75%), with an average maturity of 4 years. The most attractive entrepreneurial ecosystems (Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire) play host to most of these incubators (more than 60%).	Before engaging with a support structure, it is important to evaluate its position in the ecosystem, as well as its value proposition, degree of maturity and achievements to date. Interviewing several actors in the ecosystem has been determined as the only way to ascertain these details.

2. THE EXPECTATIONS OF ECOSYSTEM PLAYERS

In this section, we present the expectations expressed by each actor in the ecosystem vis-à-vis entrepreneurship support structures. They are many and varied, as summarized in the table below.

Figure 12. Focus on expectations of ecosystem players vis-à-vis support structures

Actors	Expectations vis-à-vis support structures
Founders	Support, training, mentoring/coaching, prototyping, access to a community and network, increased visibility, fundraising, access to equipped facilities
Growing companies	Mentoring, access to a network, financing, scaling-up of activities, internationalization
Investors	Identification of bankable projects
Research institutes	Access to means of transforming research results into high-value, job-creating business ventures
Public policymakers	Support and evidence for public policies to promote entrepreneurship, job creation, innovation (e.g. products and services to improve public service), increased tax revenue
Development agencies	Participation in development strategies to support of the private sector and foster innovation
Large companies	Rapid innovation beyond core business and home market/territory
Support structures	Advocacy, increased legitimacy via the scale-up effect, sharing resources, network expansion

2.1. For founders

The first actors to expect anything of support structures are of course the founders of new business ventures. They have an idea, an ambition, a project to create a business. Support structures can provide a number of essential services to these founders (see Part II.1). It should be noted, however, that value propositions vary greatly from one structure to the next and there are currently no established standards to impose or guarantee a minimum level of homogeneity among services provided by support structures.

These services can be of great added value to founders. Indeed, they provide a solution to the following challenges:

- Lack of access to quality infrastructure: In support structures, founders have access to facilities (for free or at preferential rates) where they can work and receive partners and investors. These premises are usually well-equipped (Internet connection, office space, printer, scanner, etc.).
- Isolation: In an incubator, entrepreneurs can take advantage of the opportunity for daily interactions with other founders, in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and skills.
- Lack of network: By joining a community and participating in training sessions and events, founders gain access to potential partners (technical, financial, media) that they may never have met under ordinary circumstances.
- Difficulty accessing necessary expertise to advance a business: Surrounded by coaches, trainers and mentors, the founders have access to professionals and experts who can answer their questions and guide them.

Such difficulties lie at the root of entrepreneurial failure in West Africa. Working with an incubator represents an opportunity to minimize or even completely circumvent these risks.

> ***When you come to MEST, you join a community. I believe one of the biggest things the MEST program gives to you is that community and the huge support. Everyone is ready to help you to get to the next level.***
> Innocent Udeogu, CEO of ONCENOUT, incubated at MEST Africa, On Twitter (May 4, 2018).

> ***I will never forget; when nobody wanted to hear about my solution, makesense and the community helped me tremendously in solving my early challenges and gaining visibility in my early years as an entrepreneur.***
> Adama Kane, Founder of Jokkosanté, supported by makeSense Africa in Senegal.

2.2. For growing businesses

More mature entrepreneurs may also need support structures, either to accelerate their business development and scale up their activities. The services they avail of are generally referred to as acceleration services (see Part II.1).

Developing businesses may also find working with support structures useful as a means of overcoming several typical challenges they encounter:

- Scaling up: Specific support can address the numerous problems faced by entrepreneurs who wish to significantly grow their business (business development, HR, production, organization, logistics, business strategy, revenue model, etc.).
- Accessing international markets: Scaling up often involves expanding operations to international markets (in Africa and beyond). Some support structures have been able to develop regional/international networks that can facilitate business expansion beyond country of origin.
- Accessing larger-scale financing: Scaling a business often requires significant financial resources. Support structures can establish special relationships with financial institutions capable of providing such amounts (via investment funds, business angels, banks) and especially prepare entrepreneurs be bankable and investment-ready. This is achieved by providing dedicated coaching and mentoring services (in areas such as legal and financial support, etc.).

> ***Big congrats to XLAfrica's francophone startup CoinAfrique, which has just raised €2.5m in Series A funding from I&P, French Partners and Mercure International.***
> Simon Duchatelet, World Bank, on Twitter (April 13, 2018).

> ***MBC discovered the spirit of entrepreneurship in me. They supported my company in areas such as business development, leadership and project and financial management. In just two years after completing the accelerator training program, I was able to increase my client base by 400% and triple revenue. Our relationship with MBC is growing organically and we hope to make more impact through their support.***
> Oxford Bonsu, Owner and CEO of Cheshgro, quote from MBC Africa website (Ghana).

2.3. For investors

Although access to finance remains a major problem for entrepreneurs in the sub-region, some investors – investment funds, business angels, private companies and some commercial banks – are gradually showing more interest in supporting entrepreneurial projects.

For these organizations, it is often difficult to identify which projects to fund, particularly since each investor has specific criteria and objectives guiding their investment decisions. How can they find the right projects in sometimes opaque and underdeveloped ecosystems? How can they confirm investee reliability and build trust in an unknown business environment?

The support structures that have already proven themselves (i.e. having already worked with many entrepreneurs, already showing a strong survival rate of supported companies, strong approval rating among local entrepreneurs, etc.) have the potential to act as well-placed intermediaries between investors and potential funding beneficiaries. Support structures can help investors identify the best projects by connecting them to their most promising and successful incubated entrepreneurs. By developing institutional partnerships, multiplying the opportunities for exchange (e.g. Demo Days, after-work networking events, etc.) and pre-selecting promising startups, support structures save potential investors precious time and energy. As previously detailed, incubators make entrepreneurs investment-ready by providing them with dedicated coaching and mentoring (legal and financial) services to facilitate entrepreneurs' understanding of the financial tools they need to succeed in investors' due diligence and advance their business.

Support structures can also reassure financial partners by providing follow-up on the optimal use of funds, thereby mitigating the risk of non-repayment. The support structure also saves time for those financial partners who may not be in a position to carry out this monitoring personally.

> ***Our problem in Senegal is that startups - even if they are successful, are often on the edge of the informal sector, so proximity is essential to identify the best deals, and even after investment, we must permanently stay hands-on to monitor and support entrepreneurs.***
> Omar Cissé, co-founder of Teranga Capital, Le Monde, June 25, 2015.

> ***Being here, pitching to investors has been very helpful. I could never have got this exposure. It's hard to be in a room full of investors interested in investing in Africa.***
> Chika Uwazie, TalentBase Founder

TONY ELUMELU FONDATION ENTREPREUNEURSHIP PROGRAM

The Tony Elumelu Foundation launched the Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programme in 2015. Consistent with the philosophy of Africapitalism, which positions Africa's private sector and entrepreneurs as the catalyst for the social and economic development of the continent, the Entrepreneurship Programme represents the 10-year, $100 million commitment of the Founder, Tony O. Elumelu CON, to identify, train, mentor and fund 10,000 African entrepreneurs, who will create a million jobs, and add $10 billion in revenue to Africa's economy.

Following its launch in 2015, the Foundation had received a total of 20,228 applications. The following year 2016, the applications received more than doubled to 45,658. In 2017, the applications received had increased to 93,246 and in 2018 to 151,692.

Among these, 4,470 entrepreneurs from the 54 African countries have benefited from the Foundation through funding, training, mentoring and the other pillars of the Entrepreneurship Programme, for a total investment by the Foundation of at least $25 million.

To reach its objectives, the Programme leverages 57 hub leads and 750 mentors, interacting with the entrepreneurs through its technology-enabled platform «TEFConnect»: https://tefconnect.com/

Africapitalism is an economic philosophy that embodies the private sector's commitment to the economic transformation of Africa through investments that generate both economic prosperity and social wealth. The Tony Elumelu Foundation through Africapitalism sees Africans taking charge of the value-adding sectors and ensuring that those value-added processes happen in Africa, not through nationalisation or government policies, but because there is a generation of private sector entrepreneurs who have the vision, the tools and the opportunity to shape the destiny of the continent. Africapitalism is not capitalism with an African twist; it is a rallying cry for empowering the private sector to drive Africa's economic and social growth.

>> Read more: http://tonyelumelufoundation.org

2.4. For research institutes

Many research institutes have difficulty translating their research results into practical application, though this is essential if research – beyond theorizing and experimentation – is to transform into innovation and produce real-world impact. However, researchers do not have a direct mandate to put their theories and research into practice.

Starting a business can be a tool to transform research ideas into high-value, job-creating business ventures, as well as introduce innovation into national economies to strengthen their competitiveness. Here again, support structures can be good intermediaries between entrepreneurs and research institutes, to facilitate exchanges and collaborations. The difficulty experienced by these very different actors when attempting to collaborate with each other, however, shouldn't be underestimated. Organizing exchanges, disseminating ideas and supporting new partnerships are all activities that can be carried out by support structures. These activities are not necessarily self-evident, of course, and result from a particular positioning of certain support structures.

> ***Research and society are too far apart, which alternatively generates blind trust or absolute mistrust of researchers. A different, deliberately cooperative kind of relationship is needed today. It involves co-creating solutions between committed actors, citizens and researchers. The innovation that will really ignite human progress will come from the collaboration of different but complementary actors. For this collaboration to be fruitful, new forms of partnerships are needed.***
> Tribune of Melanie Marcel, founder of SoScience and Sarah Marniesse, Director of Research and Innovation Mobilization at IRD, published on October 17, 2017 in the blog "Ideas for development".

2.5. For public policymakers

More and more policymakers are seeking to leverage public policy in order to foster private sector growth and entrepreneurship, perceiving it as a key instrument in addressing mass unemployment among young people in Africa, among other major development challenges. Such policies can involve the mobilization of various actors involved in supporting startups and SMEs in the given country. Today, policies make a priority of stimulating innovation, creating employment and value-generating businesses and highlighting new role models. Support structures that work closely with high-potential entrepreneurs, therefore, can and should lend their support to public policymakers, as a complement to traditional players in the market.

Support structures can be capable partners in building young people's capacity in a customized and dynamic way and supporting their entrepreneurial projects, with effective programs at a lower cost than to establish and run a dedicated public agency. Operating at the grassroots level, support structures can also underpin public initiatives to foster entrepreneurship and legislative or regulatory reforms. Finally, support structures can assist governments by identifying and advising the startups that develop products and services to modernize and improve public services. In short, this is about building new public-private collaborations to stimulate innovation in national ecosystems (see Part IV.1). Once again, however, the credibility and reliability of support structures is essential to ensuring the creation of lasting and meaningful partnerships that can have real impact for entrepreneurs on the ground.

> ***The Nigerian technology ecosystem is fast growing and becoming a successful Nigerian tech startup founder or investor is not a walk in the park. Join us as we discuss policy recommendations, issues and opportunities in the Nigerian tech ecosystem!***
> VP Foundation, April 9, 2018, on Twitter.

> ***You have just demonstrated that through you, Niger can succeed thanks to digital technology, and I congratulate you for your intelligence, perseverance and courage.***
> Message from H.E. Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou addressing the 29 finalists of the competition of e-Takara Entrepreneurs 2017. Tweet from ANSI, January 26, 2018.

2.6. For a development institution

Many international organizations, development cooperation agencies and NGOs are increasingly focusing their strategies and interventions on the private sector and promoting innovative entrepreneurship as a new way to foster endogenous and sustainable development.

However, these organizations are often far removed from entrepreneurs and unfamiliar with their circumstances on the ground. Under these circumstances, incubators and support structures are the intermediaries of choice for identifying entrepreneurs and facilitating exchanges.
In order to sustainably support development, these bilateral and international institutions are looking to engage in structural support to incubators which are increasingly identified in official documentation and strategies as pillars of enterprise development and innovation.

> ***Congratulations to the young entrepreneurs of CIPMEN, a business incubator in Niger, for sustainable and innovative development. Carriers of hope! These youths perpetuate the genius of the Nigerien people with innovative and bold projects.***
> Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, visiting the CIPMEN, Tweet, 21 February 2017.

> ***This initiative aims to take young entrepreneurs from the very beginning, to believe in themselves and to help them develop their activities. The Boost Africa initiative will deploy mixed concessional financing for young businesses, including venture capital funds, social impact funds and angel investment funds to develop high-impact activities. It will support incubators to accelerate the growth of youth activities.***
> Akinwumi Adesina, President of AfDB, at the launch of the Boost Africa initiative, November 2016.

2.7. For large companies

Large companies – regardless of their field of activity – are contending with the disruptions generated by new economic players riding the multiple revolutions digital technology is bringing to the market. To ensure their sustainability and survival, these companies must constantly reinvent themselves.

In order to adapt to this new landscape, big companies understand that they could benefit from associating with startups, particularly in the field of ICT. Partnerships between startups and large companies provide these bigger players with the kind of agility they often lack to test new products and innovations, allowing them the kind of flexibility and competitive edge normally enjoyed by smaller companies. In return, large companies provide startups with the business opportunities and industry knowledge, as well as the physical work space and financing to jump-start their development.

This new practice – known as open innovation – has emerged, including in Africa, with the proliferation of initiatives dedicated to partnerships between startups and major multinationals like Société Générale, CFAO Motors (Toyota's African subsidiary), Union Bank, Orange, MTN, Microsoft, Facebook and Google, among others.

MOBILE OPERATORS' PROACTIVITY IN SUPPORTING STARTUPS

Mobile operators are currently directly managing or engaging in partnerships with more than 14% of the support structures that have been identified in Africa. MTN, Orange and Vodafone are the leading companies in the sector, engaging with startups across the entire continent[6].

Orange is particularly active in open innovation, with three Orange Fab Labs in Dakar, Abidjan and Douala. These are accelerators of innovative startups in the fields of e-commerce, internet of things, e-education, e-health, fintech and e-agriculture. Orange is also a partner of the following incubators: CTIC Dakar in Senegal, CIPMEN in Niger, Saboutech in Guinea and Createam in Mali. To facilitate the operationalization of services startups are developing, Orange has made its APIs (Application Programming Interfaces - computer interfaces linked to the operator's main assets around identity, payment, communications and cloud computing) freely available to its new partners. It has also organized the Orange Social Entrepreneurs Award to reward social entrepreneurs from the continent. Finally, Orange recently launched a €50 million investment program dedicated to startups in Africa: Orange Digital Ventures Africa.

To encourage open innovation in a conducive environment, it is common for support structures to act as intermediaries between these big companies and startups that sometimes have trouble understanding and trusting each other.

> ***We appreciate this approach driven by Société Générale's Innovation Lab for Africa and Jokkolabs, which is both benevolent and empowering. It's a win-win initiative for our startup and Société Générale Group.***
> Pierre Gancel, Founder of Weebi, sponsored by Société Générale following a hackathon co-organized with Jokkolabs and Bluenove.

> ***We have received over 1,000 applications, of which 120 were selected from 5 different countries, namely Morocco, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. The winning startups will receive Royal Air Maroc (RAM) purchase orders and their solutions will be deployed with the clients of the company.***
> Mehdi Alaoui, Founder of La Factory, organizer of the RAM Hackathon, April 2018.

2.8. For support structures

In an ever-changing ecosystem, some countries are witnessing their support structures increasingly collaborate to reinforce and enhance each other's visibility, networks and impact.

These collaborations translate into networks and umbrella organizations where support structures commit to jointly promoting growth entrepreneurship, innovation and other common themes they may be promoting, such as women's entrepreneurship or green businesses. Objectives vary depending on the network, but the majority describe their mission as:

- Sharing resources and capacity-building activities
- Initiating and hosting common events to promote shared activities and promising startups in their ecosystem
- Communicating on a larger scale: These may include various strategies such as lobbying public actors to remove barriers impeding ecosystem development, sharing opportunities as well as important research and information among entrepreneurs and the ecosystem at large

These networks are still relatively young in the West African ecosystem and so do not exist in all countries yet. However, considering the still-limited means of most support structures, it would be interesting and beneficial for them to collaborate. Over time, they would gain legitimacy and visibility with public partners and other possible sponsors.

BOX 26. FOCUS ON COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN SUPPORT STRUCTURES AT A NATIONAL LEVEL
EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN THE SAME COUNTRY

Mali'Innov (Mali): An umbrella organization that brings Malian incubators together. Its objective is to establish a common mission and facilitate better communication in the ecosystem. The group also seeks to professionalize the activities of all its members.

Network of Incubators & Innovators in Nigeria (NINE) (Nigeria): A network of support structures in Nigeria that support the development of innovation, startups and SMEs in Nigeria. NINE is also a platform for mobilizing and sharing resources for support structures, in order to improve the performance and sustainability of their activities.

Technology and Business Hubs Network (TBHN) (Ghana): A network of support structures in Ghana that share common ideas and resources. The aim is to develop the skills of their target audience, increase the potential of local innovations and businesses, strengthen job creation capabilities and generate income. Its purpose is to strengthen the ecosystem and ensure the consistency of the actions of its members.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
Support structures respond primarily to the expectations of founders and entrepreneurs: They are their raison d'être. Support structures enable their beneficiaries to overcome many challenges and seize greater opportunities for success in their entrepreneurial journey.	Support structures are now playing the essential role of interlocutor between entrepreneurs, investors, public actors, large companies and development agencies. On a case-by-case basis, they may have mutually-beneficial interests in engaging in partnerships and other forms of collaboration.	The potential for collaboration is immense and still insufficiently explored in the West African ecosystem. Due to the immaturity of these support structures, their potential is still underestimated even though expectations are increasingly higher for their potential to foster wider development in the sub-region.

3. THE POTENTIAL FOR PARTNERSHIP

3.1. What to consider beforehand

Support structures often have a rather different profile from the traditional structures associated with advisory, financing and training services for entrepreneurs, which have tended to take the form of Consultancies or public agencies.

The starkest differences between these traditional and innovative models tend to show themselves in status, processes and methodology. These elements are worth considering when you want to partner with a particular structure in order to properly grasp what kind of organization it is and what it is capable of delivering.

It should be noted in particular that support structures, at a certain stage of maturity, are mostly recognized for having the capacity to offer:

- **Expertise in qualitative (rather than quantitative) support:** This is their main added value. The support services are in fact the value proposition of all these structures, which are designed and built to provide the most qualitative and effective assistance possible to entrepreneurs, to enable them to make significant progress in their business ventures.

- **Support based on trust and goodwill:** Support structures' methodologies imply exchanges and collaborations that are longer-term and better-suited to entrepreneurs' needs than traditional training programs or short-term funding. They also develop privileged relationships with entrepreneurs, as human and psychological assistance often plays an important role in their support. This is an essential element of ambitiously supporting a small number of high-potential entrepreneurs.

- **Tools to test and innovate on solutions and products:** Some support structures make this element their point of differentiation, by providing entrepreneurs with the tools and equipment necessary for prototyping and experimenting. Even without equipment, it may be part of the structure's mission to support innovative projects and therefore have tools to monitor and manage innovation.

- **Agile and flexible collaboration:** Often small in size, these support structures often operate according to very entrepreneurial processes, allowing for experimentation, failure and any unforeseen situations that may arise. Indeed, agility and flexibility are indispensable when working closely with entrepreneurs on a daily basis, who are themselves constantly operating under such circumstances. Capacity to adapt is essential, as well as finding alternatives to traditional approach that may not be possible due to support structures' immaturity.

- **Detailed knowledge of the target audience:** Support structures work with entrepreneurs on a daily basis, share in their difficulties and accompany them as they advance their business ventures at all levels (strategic, commercial, communications, marketing, human resources, etc.) Advancing their startups' development in this very operational way is also possible because of the detailed knowledge support structures have of both their clients and the ecosystem.

- **Good knowledge and understanding of actors in the local ecosystem:** Support structures are often central actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystems, and thus are well-placed to collaborate with other actors operating in the same environment (academic institutions, research centers, private companies, public and private investors, etc.) whose strengths and weaknesses they are extremely familiar with. Operating at the interface of these very different actors is not always easy and requires a great deal of transparency and full alignment between partners' objectives.

It is important to stress, however, that not all support structures have the same level of maturity and expertise. Moreover, support structures' development varies greatly according to the different ecosystems and national contexts in which they operate. Of course, it is also essential to take organizations' structure and other specializations into account, since, as described above, coworking spaces, incubators, accelerators and Fab Labs do not all provide the same services.

Collaborations between the different actors across the ecosystem is essential if the full potential of support structures is to be realized, particularly their socio-economic impact. What forms of collaboration already exist? What are their goals? What are their methods? Most importantly, perhaps, what are their results?

3.2. Existing partnerships in West Africa

To support organizations wishing to create partnerships with other support structures, there are already some existing networks, bringing together different actors and increasing the information available to everyone operating in the ecosystem.

BOX 27. FOCUS ON SUPPORT STRUCTURE NETWORKS

Afric'innov
>> Objectives: Afric'innov is a network of entrepreneurship-supporting structures in francophone African countries. It was formed with the intention of creating tools for support structures to facilitate their professionalization, as well as up-skilling and boosting their visibility.
>> Members: Afric'innov covers 30 countries, including most francophone African countries, mobilizing a total of 60 support structures.

AfriLabs
>> Objectives: AfriLabs was founded in 2011 to build a community and serve as a meeting place for African support structures and innovation spaces. Each member structure supports entrepreneurs, innovators, developers and African youth by providing a physical space, training and networking opportunities.
>> Members: AfriLabs brings together 100+ support structures in 30 francophone and anglophone African countries.

African Agribusiness Incubators Network (AAIN)
>> Objectives: AAIN is a pan-African network of support structures serving agribusiness entrepreneurs.
>> Members: AAIN today brings together more than 140 support structures across the continent.

Impact Hub
>> Objectives: Impact Hub is a global network that encourages entrepreneurship, idea incubation and business development. On the African continent, its main mission is to support inclusive growth. Its hubs develop and offer support programs, provide work space, access to capital and connect entrepreneurship bringing solutions to the challenges of the region.
>> Members: More than 80 hub franchises worldwide. In Africa, Impact Hub has offices in Sudan, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Ghana and Mali.

Jokkolabs
>> Objectives: Jokkolabs is a network of collaborative spaces whose mission is to bring innovative solutions that lead to shared prosperity. The network fosters peer-to-peer innovation, enriched by diversity, to enable anyone and everyone to seize opportunities, express their talent and participate actively in their communities' development.
>> Members: 12 hubs have been created in 9 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Mali, Morocco, The Gambia, Senegal), owned by entrepreneurs, for entrepreneurs.

Sahel innov
>> Objectives: In the face of small domestic markets in the Sahel region, a growing number of entrepreneurs are becoming naturally interested in expanding to neighboring countries. At this point, the structures that support entrepreneurs wishing to expand to the rest of the Sahel are facing several difficulties, because virtually no incubator is operating in multiple countries in the sub-region. For this reason, CIPMEN (Niger) undertook to create a network of Sahelian incubators in order to set-up cross-border joint assistance and collaboration programs.
>> Members: CIPMEN is the founding member of Sahel Innov with 7 other incubators members: CTIC Dakar in Senegal, SabouTech in Guinea, La Fabrique in Burkina Faso, CreaTeam in Mali, JCCM and Hadina RIMTIC in Mauritania and WenakLabs in Chad.

Every support structure is unique, as is the ecosystem that forms the backdrop to its operations. Every partnership and collaboration with a support structure, therefore, is also unique. Due to the West African ecosystem's immaturity, it is difficult to establish precise models of collaboration, nevertheless there are enough existing partnerships and examples from which we can draw inspiration and derive recommendations. It is impossible to be exhaustive based on current evidence, but our observations suggest that the main objectives of existing partnerships with support structures include:

- **Guiding graduates towards entrepreneurship:** Graduate employment is a common concern among all academic institutions. In fact, some universities and institutes of higher education have begun opening their own incubators on-campus in order to offer their graduates new perspectives, and help them on the path to self-employment. In order to succeed in this mission, many partners must work together to bring a wide range of skills, as well as technical and financial resources, to the table.

-> For concrete examples: see annexes B.1. and B.2.

- **Encouraging female leadership:** In light of challenges stimulating female entrepreneurship and the need for better conditions to facilitate women's access to employment, new forms of collaboration between support structures and different organizations have been emerging. These partnerships are not just with traditional development partners, but also with companies and private foundations that are also seeking to support women's entrepreneurship.

-> For concrete examples: see annexes B.3 and B.4.

- **Boosting the national economy:** Public actors are increasingly looking at local ecosystem and startups as relevant and legitimate partners that are capable of innovating to tackle national challenges. Public programs are therefore seeking to adapt in order to take these emerging actors into account, as well as the structures dedicated to supporting them.

-> For concrete examples: see annexes B.5 and B.6.

- **Generating positive social and/or environmental impact:** There are many social and environmental challenges facing West African economies. Most support structures not only help advise startups define their economic/or business models, but also maximize their positive social and environmental impacts. This is why many players in the international ecosystem, including Facebook and Google, consider support structures to be their partners of choice.

-> For concrete examples: see annexes B.7 and B.8.

- **Translating research products into business ventures:** As the world becomes more complex with increasing risks and emergencies, the need for short-term solutions is increasingly urgent. Neither publications nor patents can provide an optimal response by themselves, either. Scientific research needs to be more rooted in reality by defining relevant research questions and being more creative and effective in the solutions they propose. Research institutions must therefore open up and collaborate with new actors who can enrich their analysis. In this context, support structures represent new potential partners for research institutes.

-> For concrete examples: see annexes B.9 and B.10.

- **Testing innovative funding mechanisms:** Since traditional actors (commercial banks, microfinance institutions) have not yet managed to adapt their value propositions to startups - particularly at the pre-seed stage - it is imperative to find new mechanisms that are suitable to small local businesses' needs. Moreover, as support structures become increasingly recognized for their expertise, trust in their abilities grows. Financial players are therefore hesitating less and less to engage in partnerships with support structures to test innovative financing tools.

-> For concrete examples: see annexes B.11 and B.12.

- **Promoting regional and international champions:** The international community is increasingly interested in the proliferation of startups in Africa. In order to support the scaling-up of the most promising startups, many international players have opted to participate in or sponsor the entrepreneurship-supporting initiatives of incubators and similar structures.

-> For concrete examples: see annexes B.13 and B.14.

- **Promoting open innovation:** More multinationals are leveraging support structures to foster collaboration between startups in the local ecosystem and develop potential business partnerships with successful incubees. Events and competitions in original and ambitious formats are emerging (e.g. a hackathon in a Boeing 747 sponsored by Royal Air Maroc).

-> For concrete examples: see annexes B.15 and B.16.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
Support structures are expected to be both benevolent, agile and flexible in their relationships with partners. Their detailed knowledge of actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem is also an asset that is highly sought-after.	To date, support structures only have the capacity to intervene on a small scale. They would rather provide qualitative than quantitative support, and their means are still limited to multiply their efforts.	Collaborations and partnerships help unite individual efforts to promote entrepreneurship in an ecosystem. By combining human, financial and technical capacity, the results may be impactful in terms of resolving economic, social and environmental challenges.

PART IV

ACTIONS

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECOSYSTEM STAKEHOLDERS

Support structures must achieve their crucial goal of helping startups become prosperous, employment-generating and competitive both at home and on international markets. Moreover, the more innovative startups adding high value-added products and services to the market that meet the needs of local populations, the greater and more noticeable their impact on African economies will be. Support structures therefore represent a great opportunity to stimulate pro-poor and inclusive growth. Despite their potential, however, these structures' limitations and difficulties are also presented in this section as well as recommendations for all ecosystem stakeholders to act and strengthen their impact.

Three major findings will also be discussed. Support structures can be strategic partners to promote entrepreneurship and ultimately job creation and innovation in West Africa, though few actors – public or private – have seized on this opportunity. Furthermore, it is clear that most support structures need to professionalize before they can fulfill their mission. Finally, faced with the urgent and growing need to foster the emergence of innovative and successful high-growth entrepreneurs in West African countries, working to fill the gaps in the region's entrepreneurial ecosystems should also be a central policy goal.

1. PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP, JOB CREATION AND INNOVATION ON A LARGE SCALE IN COLLABORATION WITH SUPPORT STRUCTURES

1.1. Findings

Leveraging support structures to foster entrepreneurship and innovation is not the exclusive goal of entrepreneurs and founders of new businesses. To date, more and more public actors understand the value of collaborating with support structures as trusted third parties. Some public actors delegate the services they are called upon to deliver, while others consult support structures for advice on reform and regulations or employ them to innovate within public services.

Large companies have also invested in programs that collaborate with support structures. These partnerships serve to diversify bigger players' value propositions, while collaborating with local startups. They rely on startups to co-create new services, thereby opening up new opportunities throughout the ecosystem. The role of support structures is key to understanding the needs of both sides, identifying startups and connecting them, mediating on legal issues (particularly those related to intellectual property), coaching and incubating identified and approved projects.

There are many opportunities in terms of partnerships with support structures, though the potential benefits that may result also vary. Recommendations for key stakeholders are provided below.

1.2. Recommendations for public actors

- **Delegate certain aspects of entrepreneurship policies to support structures:** Like its peers in developed countries, the public sector in Africa could benefit from efforts that have already been undertaken by support structures to effectively implement entrepreneurship policies, including those related to capacity building and access to finance and markets. Leveraging these structures eliminates the need to set up new, more costly public agencies that are often poorly adept to meet the needs of innovative entrepreneurs. It also avoids dependence on international consultants who are very expensive and tend to be unfamiliar with local contexts in the field, in addition to being unable to provide medium and long-term follow-up. By contrast, using local support structures allows governments to implement entrepreneurial support instruments that are already integrated into local ecosystems and are bottom-up, meaning they are a priori better suited to meet the needs of businesses. Indeed, small-scale interventions make it possible to adapt services to specific local market failures, as well as respond in-time to rapidly-shifting circumstances and incubees' needs, with support structures accompanying their clients not only in the short-term but sometimes even upon completion of incubation.

- **Consult support structures when developing public policies:** Since they are already immersed in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem and are therefore familiar with entrepreneurs' needs and aspirations, consulting support structures is recommended before embarking on legislative and regulatory reforms that concern entrepreneurs (e.g. reform of the public procurement code, definition of the private sector development strategy). This would increase the likelihood of public policies that best respond to entrepreneurs' needs.

- **Improve public services by leveraging innovative startups via support structures:** Digital technology presents governments with enormous opportunities to modernize public services as well as generate greater impact, not only for targeted populations (e.g. through improved accessibility and transparency), but also with potential gains for the state (i.e. tax benefits). For example, entrepreneurs can offer customized ICT or mobile solutions to simplify administrative procedures or transmit official information. Depending on the issue at hand, public innovation programs may be proposed by support structures to foster a co-creation process between competent public administrations and the entrepreneurs.

- **Involve in support structure governance in the form of public-private partnerships:** Support structures' objectives often align with national programs for economic development, which is why promoting public-private partnerships in the governance of support structures can be very relevant. However, interference in the operational management of these structures (in the selection of entrepreneurs, for example) is not recommended. The public sector brings its long-term vision and goals of sustainable and inclusive development, while the private sector imposes agility and a work dynamic focused on achieving rapid results.

BOX 28. FOCUS ON THE I4POLICY PROGRAM

Advocating for innovative and ambitious policies with contributions from support structures carrying the voice of African entrepreneurs

i4Policy in Rwanda
In 2016, Impact Hub Kigali advocated for engaging entrepreneurs in the process of policy development on issues related to entrepreneurship and innovation. The pioneer i4Policy program was born in Rwanda, financed by OSIWA and GIZ.

Impact Hub proposed involving young entrepreneurs in the legislative process in two ways:

- Events (hackathon and World Café) to identify key issues and then brainstorm to find solutions;
- Brainstorming on specific legislation or government plans, which are first presented by government officials, then questioned by entrepreneurs who step into the shoes of policymakers. In this exercise, policymakers must agree to be mere observers.

To date, collaborative work has been conducted on public procurement legislation, as well as private sector development strategy.

i4Policy in Nigeria
In 2018, a policy hackathon was organized in Abuja and Lagos, Nigeria by i4Policy, Civic Innovation Lab and Impact Hub Lagos, with the support of GIZ's Make-IT in Africa program.
Participants became policymakers for a day with a mandate to create legislation that breaks down the barriers to innovative entrepreneurship. More than 100 people participated in the policy hackathons in both cities, with more than 40 policy proposals emerging from brainstorming sessions. A white paper with concrete policy recommendations has also been shared with the public and Nigerian policymakers who are committed to the process.

i4Policy for Africa
Representatives from 45 African support structures and innovation communities in 25 countries gathered at Impact Hub Kigali, Rwanda, to co-design better innovation and entrepreneurship policies. This event – the African Innovation Hub Convention – was organized in conjunction with the Transform Africa Summit. The Convention concluded with a new political manifesto – "the Africa Innovation Policy Manifesto" – which was approved unanimously. The target audience was African decisionmakers at the national and regional level. 24 hours after its approval in Kigali, 90 support structures from 32 countries publicly supported the manifesto, representing more than 450,000 people from their communities.

Following the model in Rwanda and Nigeria, i4policy now supports innovation communities in various countries to organize national Policy Hackathons, notably in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Benin, with the support of the World Bank.

For more information: www.i4policy.org

1.3. Recommendations for private actors

- **Dare to try open innovation by leveraging support structures:** It is widely acknowledged that open innovation programs can provide pragmatic local solutions to large private companies whose structure and position on the market often make them ill-suited to design and implement innovative solutions. Support structures can give large companies the opportunity to get involved in co-creation with startups, in order to meet their need for proximity to the market and create a culture of agility that will help them improve or reinvent their business models.

- **Invest in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem to strengthen its competitiveness over time:** Large companies can rely on incubators to finance business development programs and build the capacity of small-scale entrepreneurs. This represents an investment for these companies because ultimately, they will be able to find solutions via the smaller players they are supporting indirectly, and these solutions could strengthen their competitiveness, visibility and reputation

- **Invest directly in startups supported by incubators:** For example, through the creation of corporate venture funds. This promotes innovation in the businesses' given sector and/or makes it possible to explore new markets. Working with startups supported by incubators is also more in line with strategic and organizational goals than conventional financial investments, as it involves less risk and cost to the sponsoring company. It is also a strong tool to understand new business models, use cases and modes of consumption made possible by digital technology. Corporate venture funds, meanwhile, allow startups to pursue their entrepreneurial ambition in the best conditions of autonomy (since corporate venture funds always hold minority shares), while benefiting from the resources and networks of large businesses.

1.4. Recommandations for support structures

- **Prove the relevance and the legitimacy of their work:** African policymakers are increasingly concerned about youth unemployment and must act to avoid worsening social, economic and migration crises. Support structures can be part of this narrative, but it remains up to them as the new players on the market to present what they are offering and demonstrate their added value to the ecosystem. In addition, their hands-on knowledge of the individual and collective challenges and expectations of entrepreneurs make them essential and legitimate spokespeople for their sector.

- **Demonstrate agility and impact on the private sector:** Support structures' lack of maturity has not (yet) allowed them to show a significant impact on their respective ecosystems on a larger scale. It is, however, important to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the public sector and large companies, in order to be ready to implement distinct and innovative services as soon as an opportunity for partnership presents itself. Support structures should indeed be ready to support governments' legislative reforms, translate research results into business ventures and publicly brainstorm about solutions to ongoing social and environmental challenges. In this way, real dialogue can gradually emerge and demonstrate the multifaceted purpose these structures can fulfill.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
Support structures represent affordable (value-for-money) and tailor-made solutions to stimulate growth entrepreneurship, compared to services and programs deployed by governments and other development agencies. There are numerous ways to collaborate in order to ignite growth entrepreneurship and innovation for the benefit of local people.	Without a major change in scale, the impact of these support structures (in terms of growth of client companies, breakthrough innovations, job creation, etc.) will remain limited in West Africa.	Partnerships with support structures can be mutually beneficial. More and more collaborations are emerging with committed actors looking for new ways to boost entrepreneurship, innovation and job creation.

2. Investing in the professionalization of support structures

A support structure at minimum consists of a competent multidisciplinary team and an equipped and attractive professional facility, as well as a network of committed partners. Faced with the extreme difficulty support structures experience harnessing all of these resources, especially when starting out, this guide proposes a series of recommendations to promote the professionalization of support structures.

2.1. Findings

The quality of a support structure's management is the engine driving its success or failure. In addition to being experienced, members of management teams must possess an excellent knowledge of the business world, financing and innovation. They must also be dynamic, extroverted, good communicators and versatile. They must be comfortable with business model issues and at the same time with business development and marketing, have a good understanding of business law, digital communication, accounting and financing and how to coordinate networks, etc.

Supporting entrepreneurs cannot be improvised. It is a full-time job and therefore must be a vocation. A manager must have the necessary entrepreneurial spirit, passion, understanding of the risk appetite that drives entrepreneurs to innovate, as well as the capacity to interact with actors from all walks of life, including those operating in both the public and private sector. They must be able to set a good example for the companies they support. Poor management or bad relationships between incubators' operational teams and the businesses they support has the potential to ruin any collaboration. Ultimately, the real added value provided to businesses by incubators depends on the quality of support and advisory services.

Supporting entrepreneurs is a demanding job that requires a high level of availability to client entrepreneurs – between two and ten entrepreneurs to coach simultaneously, according to interviews with support structures. A manager must devote himself to all the core areas of his incubator and activities, particularly the events incubators must constantly organize, promote and facilitate.

However, given West African ecosystems' lack of maturity, it is hardly surprising that relatively few people possess all the required skills to effectively lead a high-performing incubator. The ideal candidate is therefore often almost impossible to find.

Beyond human capital, incubators' physical infrastructure must be fully functional and ideally meet the following criteria:

- Location in the heart of a dynamic economic area
- Have an open space, that is welcoming and conducive to stimulating creativity and facilitating exchanges between founders
- Have good quality technical infrastructure (Internet connection, printers, photocopiers, scanners, etc.)
- Have a friendly space for catering and relaxation, etc.

All these prerequisites, however, require significant investment from the start.

Finally, when a support structure first opens, it typically has not yet amassed all the relevant players into its network. This is quite clear in the West African ecosystem, where many support structures are launched as private initiatives by isolated actors, as private initiatives in the form of associations. The reality, however, is that it often takes time to build trust and it is often necessary to start its activities alone before potential partners are willing to commit to serious collaboration.

Nonetheless, even without an existing network of partners, the required initial investment or experience, many incubators decide to take the plunge anyway. While some manage to structure themselves properly and professionalize over time, others are forced to shut down operations or put their projects on hold until their environment improves, which could be a long wait in certain West African countries.

Figure 13. Key failure factors for support structures identified during a brainstorming session conducted in 2017 by the World Bank with West African support structures.

Strategic aspect	Key failures
Value proposition	• Model adopted without taking local contexts into account • Cheap and obsolete services
Economic model	• Dependence on short-term grants alone • Reluctance to develop income-generating activities or business development
Human resources policy	• Significant staff turnover that limits progress (capitalization, network) and trust in support provided • Recruitment of inexperienced staff to keep costs down
Target audience	• Focus on inexperienced founders • Uncompetitive selection process due to limited interest by few candidates
Mentality	• Philanthropic or academic mindset (especially when incubation services are implemented by NGOs or universities), sometimes incompatible with startups' crucial need to be profitable • Lack of independence from donors
Ability to finance clients	• No connection with potential financial partners • No financial expertise made available to clients

Faced with the needs of West African economies to boost growth entrepreneurship and innovation, it has become increasingly important to support these pioneers who are often already operating in civil society. Every year, more and more support structures are launching and are begging to be supported to professionalize their approach and serve the public interest.

2.2. Recommandations for all actors

- **Strengthen the skill set of support structures' teams**: This profession requires a multidisciplinary skill-set and so building the capacity of support structure's teams is essential if they are to offer a complete and appropriate range of services to entrepreneurs. These programs must be structured, offered on a regular and continuous basis, with due consideration to the diversity of African ecosystems' specificities.

- **Combine human, technical and financial resources:** The presence of the State, universities and/or private companies in support structures' governance or simply their networks of partners can provide them with access to in-kind contributions: physical infrastructure, pro bono expertise, access to laboratories, recruitment of trainees, etc.

BOX 29. FOCUS ON THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE'S IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA
"Promoting employment through entrepreneurship among young people and women in francophone sub-Saharan Africa:" a program by International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF)

The first phase of this program (2015-2018) has sought to strengthen the capacity of thirteen francophone partner countries, including eight in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo), so that they can identify and implement the most appropriate programs in terms of job creation and income generation, particularly in the sectors with high employment potential in intervention areas and/or in strategic sectors for la Francophonie (digital economy, green growth and sustainable agriculture, social entrepreneurship and culture). As such, three intervention components were defined:

1. Support for the development and creation of business incubators to promote entrepreneurship training, enterprise development, job creation and support for innovation;
2. Support for strengthening the business environment (regulatory, administrative, financial, regulatory and strategic) in order to foster the creation and development of enterprises;
3. The development of platforms for the exchange of best practices on employment and entrepreneurshipt.

To date, OIF has directly assisted 40 support structures under component 1, including more than 20 in West Africa. It has also engaged other partners to participate collectively in the:

- Development of training content and capacity building for partner incubator teams;
- Implementation of a certification for incubator-type structures;
- Co-organization and assistance with mobility for participants to attend physical meetings of the community of incubators.

2.3. Recommandations for support structures

- **Encourage the networking of support structures and entrepreneurs at the national, regional and international level:** This would share resources and facilitate transversal services, part of which could be implemented virtually, thereby reducing operating costs. Support structures exchanging their experiences is crucial to understanding the key factors of their success and failure. It is important to plan regular exchanges, partnerships and immersion programs with other support structures in order to adopt best practices.

- **Capitalize on best practices and evaluate results:** In the face of a relatively high turnover of staff in these structures and considering the importance of partners who will often assess results based on performance, it is vital for support structures to put effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place. Whether to identify the impacts generated or to build a database of entrepreneurs and experts, it is necessary to know how to measure progress and maintain the link with entrepreneurs that have left the incubator. This is also important in order to assess incubees' constantly-evolving needs.

BOX 30. FOCUS ON AFRIC'INNOV

Afric'innov was set up on the basis of two observations:

- The development of entrepreneurship involves an ecosystem where structures (incubators, accelerators, Fab Labs, etc.) that support entrepreneurs play a central role.
- The success of supported entrepreneurs is premised on the quality of services offered by these structures.

The mission of Afric'innov is therefore to strengthen and further professionalize entrepreneurship support structures. To achieve this, four components were developed:

- **Training support structure teams:** The professionalization of support structures requires training their management teams. The program responds to their professionalization needs by organizing classroom-training sessions and/or providing online training content.

- **Development of digital tools and a resource center dedicated to entrepreneurship:** Support for entrepreneurs requires the use of several tools that are not always available. Afric'innov deploys a Software as a Service (SaaS) with all the functionalities needed to monitor incubated businesses. This software will is accessible via the Africinnov.com platform, which is seeking to establish itself as the professional network of support structures in Africa.

- **Establishment of an innovative mechanism for pre-seed funding:** Afric'innov provides entrepreneurs incubated in support structures that are part of the Afric'innov network with repayable advances at zero interest rates. These advances are intended to finance or replenish the pre-seed funding mechanism implemented by each local support structure.

- **Establishment of a certification for entrepreneurship support structures:** The main objective of the Afric'innov brand is to provide a quality framework for support structures' activities in Africa, as well as all stakeholders in the ecosystem. The Afric'innov label will make it easy to identify structures that offer quality support.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
The wealth of a support structure rests primarily on its human capital. In addition, entrepreneurial behavior and quality management are essential for the success and sustainability of an incubator. Supporting entrepreneurs and running an incubator is still a little-understood profession and continuous training – adapted to each local context – should help boost the professionalism of these actors.	Beyond an infrastructure that must be professional and appealing, the success of the support structure largely depends on the quality of the networks it mobilizes, both for attracting the best projects and for connecting entrepreneurs with the right experts and commercial, industrial, technical and institutional partners.	The quality of support structures' services varies greatly from one organization to another, while many of them experience major internal challenges. Nevertheless, the emergence of a multitude of growth entrepreneurs in the region is essential and so we must understand how to assist support structures themselves if they are to offer better-quality services and be structural partners.

3. To conclude… let's go further!

Support structures represent a link in the value chain within entrepreneurial ecosystems. They have become indispensable for developing and providing a more favorable environment to encourage the emergence of high-potential startups. However, it is important to remember that support structures cannot act alone and that their results and impact in fact largely depend on the context in which they operate.

Part I.2 presented key findings related to the limitations of entrepreneurial ecosystems. In order to complete this series of recommendations, complementary proposals must be made – primarily for the attention of public actors – in order to address major obstacles in the entrepreneurial ecosystems.

(1) Encourage the deployment of cross-training, systematically incorporating sensitization and training on entrepreneurship and digital skills in order to develop an entrepreneurial culture: This could be a tool for equipping young Africans so that they have the capacity and ambition to turn to a form of self-employment that creates value. It is important to instill this entrepreneurial and digital culture from a young age so as to encourage professions in entrepreneurship, elicit the interest of the public in entrepreneurship and prepare future graduates to meet the challenges of entrepreneurship.

(2) Support the establishment of administrative, legal and fiscal frameworks that favor innovation and growth entrepreneurship: Through proactive public policies, local businesses bringing added value and innovation can emerge, particularly through:

- Tax or financial incentives e.g. tax credits, subsidies, exemptions
- Administrative and organizational assistance e.g. creation of one-stop shops, simplification of administrative procedures, adaptation of research and academic contracts, encouragement of skills-based sponsorship

Societal support e.g. dissemination of a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, valuing entrepreneurs as creators of added value and national wealth in the political discourse

(3) Advocate and innovate to improve access to funding for entrepreneurs: Startups at the seed stage struggle to attract financing from traditional players (banks, microfinance institutions, etc.). Public actors should therefore incentivize business angels and private investors (seed funds, corporate philanthropy) to develop the local private sector's potential. Moreover, the mismatch between the supply of funding and entrepreneurs' needs must be addressed, particularly in terms of financing. Other countries' experience can provide inspiration, for example, the establishment of innovation guarantee funds, the encouragement and supervision of crowdfunding platforms and the granting of zero-interest loans or monthly allowances (grants) for entrepreneurs. These alternatives to traditional financing could significantly boost innovative entrepreneurs with high potential. It should be noted that support structures can also play the role of trusted third parties between entrepreneurs and financial partners.

Step by step: Three key points to remember		
Beyond supporting incubators in their growth and standardization, the main gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystems in West Africa also need to be filled. Tackling deficiencies in entrepreneurial culture, human capital, access to finance and markets, regulations and support schemes for entrepreneurship should be a priority for West African governments.	Public policymakers need to create favorable conditions for an entrepreneurial ecosystem that is more conducive for the success of startups. They must be leaders in the definition and implementation of public policies and legislative measures to encourage more entrepreneurship. Specifically, they must work to remove current barriers and constraints while increasing opportunities and benefits for local entrepreneurs who dare to embark on a risky business venture.	Beyond their governance role, public policymakers are expected to be the first ”spokespersons” in favour of local and innovative entrepreneurship. Their advocacy on both the local and international scene can make a difference. Consultation with all public, private and institutional stakeholders must promote coherent and impactful communications and measures at the regional level.

ANNEXES

A. GLOSSARY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS

WORDS & CONCEPTS	DEFINITIONS
Accelerator	An acceleration program provides companies with the right tools to grow: mentoring, access to networks and investors and other forms of support to achieve financial sustainability. Companies that participate in an acceleration program are usually beyond the startup phase and have entered the phase of scaling-up but need advice and other resources to accelerate their growth. Accelerators generally offer a short and intense program and have the following characteristics: • Brief duration: short and intense programs (typically between three and six months) • Cohort-based: selection and formation of a group of companies to facilitate peer learning • Open application: the process is open to all companies, while also competitive • Facilitates access to funding: provides participating companies with direct access to financing or direct contact with potential investors
Angel investor / Business angel	Refers to an individual who is investing financially in a startup. Most of the time, the angel investor is among the first investors and is directly interested in the project in which he invests. He provides the entrepreneur with his skills, experience, business network and time. The angel investor is also an associate-entrepreneur.
API	API is an acronym for Applications Programming Interface. An API is a programming interface that allows you to connect to an application in order to exchange data. An API is opened and proposed by the program owner.
Bankable / Investment-ready	Likely to be financed by an investor.
Brainstorming	Technique leveraging the collective intelligence of a group or individuals to develop original (creative) ideas. In brainstorming sessions, each participant is invited to provide ideas or suggestions related to the topic.
Business hotel	Place of accommodation for companies, without offering support or assistance. Accommodation in a business hotel is not limited in time, unlike incubators or nurseries.
Business manager / Business developer	An incubator team member, the business manager's main mission is to support entrepreneurs through personalized advice and training. He may also have possible connections with technical and financial partners according to his business and incubees' needs.
Business model	The set of mechanisms that enables a company to create value and capture that value for profit. The business model is the way the business will actually make money.
Business model canvas	Simulated representation of a business model describing the main aspects of an organization's activities, both in terms of its objectives, resources, networks and financial flow. The best-known model was designed by Alexander Osterwalder and has 9 categories: target segments, value proposition, distribution channels, customer relationship, revenue streams, key resources, key activities, key partners and cost structure.
Business nursery	A structure (often public) that intervenes after the incubation phase and over a period of time which varies in principle from 3 to 5 years. It provides an environment that facilitates business development at an affordable cost. Examples of services provided include private or open office space, telephone and photocopying services, meeting rooms, and storage space. Nurseries are also a place of exchange and source of networking for entrepreneurs who have already started their business, providing support in the form of collective or individualized services, including advice, training or shared services.

Business plan	Document describing the whole of a business project: the activity itself, target market, marketing strategy, management of human resources, etc. It includes all planned expenditures and resources envisaged in the short and medium term. Its purpose is twofold: it allows the entrepreneur to mark their path and define where they are going while also convincing banks and potential partners of the venture's viability.
Capital	Resources in cash and in-kind (e.g. patent, skills and human capital) brought definitively to a company by its founders at the time of creation.
Coaching	Personalized professional support to achieve concrete and measurable results. Through the coaching process, beneficiary individuals/entrepreneurs deepen their knowledge and improve their performance.
Corporate venture	Investment fund inside a large business with a double objective: financial and strategic intelligence.
Coworking	Style of work that involves a shared workspace and a network of workers encouraging exchange and openness.
Crowdfunding	Funding of projects (of enterprises, NGOs, etc.) by an interested but non-professional public – the "crowd» – generally using interactive media as a channel of funding. There are 4 types of crowdfunding: by donation (business or social venture), by loan (with or without interest refund to the investor), by capital (with a return on investment expected by the investor) and by presale (in which the user receives a product or service in return for his contribution).
Disruptive technology	Disruptive technology is technology that displaces an established technology and shakes up an existing industry or a revolutionary product that creates a completely new industry.
Due diligence	Set of checks and balances that an investor makes before a transaction. It is a concept that allows a future buyer to get an idea of the precise situation of a company before deciding on an investment.

Entrepreneurial ecosystem	An entrepreneurial ecosystem is the operational combination of a set of factors that enables businesses to realize their strong growth potential. There are six main factors that define this environment: markets, human capital, accessibility and diversity of funding, regulation, culture and support systems.
Fab Lab or Makerspace	Third place structures open to the public that provide machine tools and tools with numerical control that are usually reserved for professionals for the purpose of rapid prototyping or small-scale production. These third places allow people with the same mindset to share their ideas, tools and skills.
Fintech	Combines the terms "finance" and "technology" and refers to an innovative startup that leverages technology to rethink financial and banking services.
Founder	Refers to anyone who has a business idea and wants to develop it.
Frugal / Jugaad innovation	Approach to meeting a need in the most simple and effective way using minimal resources. It is often summed up as providing low cost, high-quality solutions or innovating better with less.
Fundraising	Operational term by which an enterprise or group of investors finds new financial resources. This fundraising results in capital growth for an enterprise and often comes from various investors, such as angel investors, institutional investors or individuals if the company is listed on the stock exchange.
Growth entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurs driven by opportunities, demonstrating the willingness and ability to grow their business.
Hackathon	Combining the terms "hacking" and "marathon," a hackathon is an event where developers get together to do collaborative computer programming on a specific topic in order to create mobile applications or software. Traditionally, it takes place in a 48-hour format and at the end of the event, each team makes a short presentation on their project.

ICT	Acronym for information and communications technology. Includes all companies in the digital sector.
Incubator	As support structures for business creation projects, incubators can provide support in terms of accommodation, advice, networking and funding or support for fundraising during the early stages of a business' life. Unlike a business nursery, an incubator caters for very young companies or companies still being created, offering them a set of adapted services. Incubators can differentiate themselves by the services they offer, whether they are free or not, or by the type of projects they target.
Innovation	Implementation of a new or significantly-improved product (good or service) or process. It can take the form of a new method of marketing or a new organizational method for entreprises, including the organization of the workplace or external relations. The Oslo Manual includes four categories in its definition of innovation: product (good or service), process, organization and marketing.
Intellectual property	Refers to all the exclusive rights from the intangible property that is the result of human creativity to the author or rightful owner of a product/creation. It includes industrial, literary and artistic property and generally consists of patents, copyrights, etc.
Interest-free loan	Loans with a social vocation, without guarantee or surety and at a zero percent rate, generally granted to the founders or managers of companies (and not to the company itself) in order to finance their businesses. They are often granted under the condition of fulfilling a certain number of social criteria (e.g. employment or development potential). Each borrower will have to certify on their honor their ability to repay the loan.
Intrapreneur	An intrapreneur is an entrepreneur within a large organization, who uses entrepreneurial skills without incurring the risks associated with those activities. Intrapreneurs are usually employees within an organization who are assigned to work on a special idea or project, and they are instructed to develop the project like an entrepreneur would. Intrapreneurs usually have the resources and capabilities of the firm at their disposal.

Love money	Term that denotes funding obtained from a network of family and friends (parents, friends, neighbors, relations).
Master class	This refers to training given by an expert on a subject matter to an interested audience.
Mentoring	Personal, voluntary and free confidential support provided over a long period of time by a mentor to meet the specific needs of a person – the mentee - based on their personal and professional development-related objectives, as well as the development of their skills in a given environment.
Microcredit	Financial loans that are generally small amounts granted to people who cannot access the traditional banking system. Reimbursement rates are in principle higher than in traditional financial channels. The concept was developed by economics professor Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh at the end of the 1970s and has been widely developed in both developed and developing countries.
Mobile payment / Mobile money	Refers to financial services accessible by mobile phone. These primarily include checking balances, paying bill, issuing prepaid cards and transferring money.
Networking	Establishment of a network of relationships that can provide support, advice and even funding to entrepreneurs.
Open innovation	Process of accelerating innovation through collaboration with different actors involved in the ideation or innovation process (customers, suppliers, partners, etc.). Open innovation can create opportunities, establish new markets and increase sales, as well as boost the impact on stakeholders (in terms of cost reduction, access to a larger customer base, filling technological gaps, etc.)
Pre-incubator	The pre-incubator hosts the founder before a company is created. Its objective is to validate the project before supporting it. The pre-incubator provides support services and advice on entrepreneurship.

Pitch or elevator pitch	Short (30 seconds to 5 minutes), concise, clear, well-structured presentation of a business idea. In general, the goal is to catch the attention of an interlocutor/investor and peak their interest in order to create a second opportunity to meet them with more time to explore the business and possibilities of investing.
Private equity	Acquisition of equity interests in usually unlisted companies. This operation is carried out by purchasing either existing securities from former shareholders or newly-issued securities during a capital increase. Private equity can be used to finance young companies (venture capital), the development of growth firms (growth capital) and transmit or acquire companies (leveraged buyouts).
Proof of concept (PoC) or Minimum Viable Product (MVP)	Basic version of a new product or service, which will be improved based on feedback from the first set of users/customers. PoC will give rise to more sophisticated versions later if the first step is validated.
Research and Development (R&D)	Business activity of creating new products or improving existing ones, directly or indirectly.
Seed fund/funding	Funds allocated to a company to support it at the seed stage, generally in the realm of hundreds of thousands of dollars.
Skills-based sponsorship	This is when a company makes their employees and skills available to other organizations, at the service of missions of general interest.
Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)	Companies employing between 20 and 249 employees in size, i.e. between very small enterprises and medium-sized companies.
Social entrepreneurship / Social business	A way of conducting business that places economic efficiency at the service of society and the environment. Social enterprises bring innovative solutions to social and/or environmental challenges by combining impact and economic efficiency.

Startup	Refers to an innovative company that has strong development potential and therefore requires significant investments to finance its rapid growth.
Startup studio / Startup factory	A company that is specialized in the creation of startups. Its principle is to create new companies at different rates and to develop several in tandem. Unlike an incubator or an accelerator that only support the founder or entrepreneur in the creation phase of a startup, a startup studio is characterized by strategic, operational and financial involvement in the business. A startup studio brings its experience and skills in the management and development of startups and is the majority shareholder in their capital. Startup studio teams are composed of rare talents in different fields (management, marketing, commercial, etc.), which will launch the startups and develop them until they reach economic maturity.
Subsistence entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurs driven by necessity i.e. individuals who neither intend to nor are capable of scaling up their businesses.
Tech hub	Physical space (city, district or offices) that encourages the success of innovative technological startups. The most popular example is probably Silicon Valley.
Technopole	A center that gathers manufacturing or service companies in the high-tech sector. Technopoles are mostly located in the outskirts of large cities, close to research facilities (universities, private laboratories, etc.).
Third place	Physical space intended to host a working community to allow it to freely share resources, skills and knowledge. This concept brings together initiatives such as coworking spaces, collaborative spaces, Fab Labs, hackerspaces, makerspaces and technological innovation spaces.

Value proposition	Value provided to the target audience/clients targeted by the founder. The purpose is not to present the functionalities of the product/service but to present the benefits that result from its use, from the point of view of the customer. The value proposition must be concise, simple for the client to understand, and must offer an undeniable benefit.
Venture capital	Investment as equity or quasi-equity in young or startup companies usually with a high technological inclination.
World Café	The World Café is a creative process that aims to facilitate constructive dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and ideas, with a view to creating a network of exchanges and actions. This process reproduces the atmosphere of a café where participants discuss an issue or topic in small groups in a round-table format. At regular intervals, participants change tables. A host stays at the table and summarizes the previous conversation to the newcomers. The ongoing conversations are then "fertilized" with ideas from previous conversations with other participants. At the end of the process, the main ideas are summarized in a plenary session and the possibilities for follow-up are discussed.

B. CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIPS WITH SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN WEST AFRICA

The following case studies illustrate the potential collaborations between support structures and other ecosystem stakeholders. Qualitative and quantitative data was provided by the support structures and/or initiators of these partnerships.

1. PROMOTING SELF-EMPLOYMENT FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

Who?

- Institution of higher education: University of Abomey Calavi (UAC) in Benin;
- Incubator: UAC Startup Valley, launched by the UAC Foundation;
- Various technical and financial partners: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Benin, 4 Beninese cities, RUFORUM (network of 66 African universities), SNV (Netherlands Development Organization), Mastercard Foundation, International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF);
- Donor Governments: Benin, Canada, the Netherlands, France.

What?

The UAC found that less than 20% of its 20,000 annual graduates were successfully joining the labor market 3 years after graduation. In light of this, the UAC's task force team set up the UAC Startup Valley Incubator Program whose main missions are to:

- Ignite an entrepreneurial culture in the university community;
- Support and supervise graduates in the creation and development of innovative companies with high potential to generate decent and sustainable jobs;
- Sustainably reduce the unemployment rate among university graduates.

How?

The incubator focuses on agribusinesses, technology and high value-added services. It targets graduates and students at the end of the UAC cycle, but also those from other public universities and private colleges.

The process is as follows:

- Recruitment (4 months): awareness, pre-selection and selection of business ideas after 3 technical, entrepreneurial culture and ideation workshops;
- Pre-incubation (8 months): 3 technical workshops to study business projects, prototype and search for partnerships;

- Incubation (24 months): personalized support for product development, market placement, recruitment and training of personnel, structuring of businesses, management of initial investment, etc.
- Post-incubation (12 months): exit of successful businesses, monitoring and evaluation.

Outcomes:
- 328 graduates and students trained in entrepreneurship.
- 67 incubated projects.
- 39 companies created.
- € 800,000 raised (i.e. € 100,000 reinvested in the form of interest-free loans for incubated businesses).

Status: Activities growing since September 2014 (founding date of incubator's creation).

2. TRAINING THE 'ENTREPRENEURIAL ENGINEERS' THAT AFRICA NEEDS

Who?
- Institution of higher education: The International Institute of Water and Environmental Engineering (2iE) in Burkina Faso;
- Development partners: African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), African Development Bank (AfDB), MasterCard Foundation, International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), the World Bank Group;
- Donor Governments: France, Switzerland;
- Private partners: IAM Gold, CC3D, Total, etc.

What?
A response to the many challenges to developing the African economy: rapid urbanization, climate change, soaring oil prices, lack of access to water, poor sanitation and other basic public services. Green entrepreneurship is an important driver of development. This is why 2iE has since 2010 reinforced its engineering programs by providing its students the opportunity to receive support services to create innovative and impactful companies.

How?
The "engineer-entrepreneur" training system relies on research facilities and a network of private, scientific and institutional partners. It includes a cycle of training in technical and managerial skills for all 2iE students, in order to instill in them an entrepreneurial spirit. For those who wish to test an idea and then create their startup, they can access the incubator from within the school.

Students, graduates or external entrepreneurs selected for incubation have access to:
- Managerial and operational support to build a business model, write a business plan and patent their ideas;
- Scientific coaching to develop prototypes and/or optimize existing products;
- Equipped workspace and access to research laboratories;
- Fundraising support.

Outcomes:
- 480 students voluntarily followed the Entrepreneurship Course (training cycle concluding with a Business Plan competition) since 2010;
- 10 students/graduates were incubated within 2iE with a business startup project addressing challenges related to nutrition, access to water and energy, waste management and eco-construction;
- 11 African entrepreneurs have accessed the services of the incubator, following 3 editions of a pan-African competition - the Green StartUpChallenge - or at the request of a partner;
- 3 newly-established businesses were set-up on campus, bringing academic and scientific players closer to the private sector.

Status: Incubation activities have been sustainably integrated into the heart of the training program since 2010.

3. DEDICATING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CENTER TO BUSINESSWOMEN IN TOGO

Who?
- Incubator: Innov'Up;
- Association: The Federation of Women Entrepreneurs and Businesswomen of Togo (FEFA);
- Development partners/donors: United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF).

What?
In Togo, as in many African countries, women are already very much involved in entrepreneurship, particularly in agriculture, trade and handicrafts. Despite this, however, barely 25% of businesses created in the country between 2009 and 2012 were women-owned, while half of Togolese women work in the informal sector and struggle to transform their micro-enterprises into SMEs. In light of these findings, Innov'Up, initiated by FEFA, aims to promote competitive female entrepreneurship.

How?
A multiservice platform, Innov'Up offers a variety of services to women, primarily in incubation, for a maximum of two years. It offers strategic and technical support to startups. These startups have the opportunity to benefit from office facilities, personalized coaching, business development advisory, as-

sistance in accounting and financial management, support for fundraising and connections to find the right partners.

Outcomes:
- 42 women entrepreneurs incubated since 2016 in various fields such as catering, distribution, agri-business, hospitality, education, fashion, water and sanitation, ICT and event management;
- Over 1,800 women trained during capacity building sessions.

Status: Operational since 2016.

4. "L'OCCITANE FOR WOMEN" PROGRAM IN BURKINA FASO

Who?
- Private partner/funder: L'OCCITANE Foundation;
- Public Partner: Maison de l'Entreprise du Burkina Faso (MEBF);
- Funding agency: Initiative Ouagadougou;
- Incubator: La Fabrique.

What?
The L'OCCITANE for women program is a 2-year support program initiated by the L'OCCITANE Foundation. Aimed at promoting and supporting women's leadership, the Foundation has primarily acted through limited initiatives to help women entrepreneurs. To increase its impact, the Foundation decided to adopt a more holistic approach to support women entrepreneurs in Burkina Faso and to bring on board experts to set up this program.

How?
The L'OCCITANE Foundation wishes to support the development of strong women-led businesses in Burkina Faso. To this end, a comprehensive program has been developed: training, personalized support, provision of experts, networking, support for communication and funding.

Each partner is mobilized according to their individual specialization:
- The MEBF on training activities (2 week-long sessions given at the beginning of the program) and communications (dissemination and support for media visibility);
- La Fabrique on personalized strategic support: providing a part-time coach for each entrepreneur and coordinating the various experts working with them;
- Initiative Ouagadougou on the financing of businesses through interest-free loans and future support for fundraising via banks;
- L'OCCITANE Foundation on the overall coordination of activities, provision of subsidies for women entrepreneurs and financing of experts for each project.

All partners are mobilized to identify the winners and provide quarterly reporting, in order to remove or diminish any difficulties encountered by supported companies.

Outcomes:
- Nearly 50 applications received;
- 4 women selected for the first edition of the program;
- Business models re-designed: elimination of sometimes difficult economic and financial situations faced by the winners;
- Businesses totally repositioned in their market: identity redesign, improved service/product, clear repositioning of service/product, work on strategies for access to markets, communications support;
- Businesses with sounder governance structures: support for companies to clarify their internal organization and governance.

Status: Operational since 2016.

5. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGER

Who?
- Country: Niger;
- Public agency: National Agency for the Society of Information (ANSI);
- Incubator: CIPMEN.

What?
As part of the digital application of the Niger 2035 plan, ANSI launched the "Niger 2.0" program in July 2017, which falls under four major strategic themes:
1. The digitization of administrative procedures (e-government);
2. The creation of a technopole to foster innovation (the city of innovation);
3. The establishment of "smart villages" to open up rural areas, which account for more than 85% of the population of Niger;
4. The promotion of digital technology through the organization of events and other activities.

In this context, ANSI wished to collaborate with the CIPMEN incubator to promote ICT and make the concept of "Smart Villages" a reality, whose goal is to facilitate access to basic social services (education, health, agriculture, etc.) in rural areas using digital technology as an enabler. Given that this project is largely based on the ability of entrepreneurs to innovate in an ecosystem that takes local contexts into account, the basis of the partnership between CIPMEN and ANSI is similar to an Open Innovation model. To illustrate this, the two organizations, with the participation of the Maison de l'Entreprise (Chamber of Commerce), jointly organized the first edition of the annual digital competition, e-Takara, in 2017 to discover young talented Nigeriens that are undertaking innovative entrepreneurial projects. The winners of this competition were awarded according to the innovativeness of their projects and their potential to address a public service issue (digital solutions proposed for recurring social and economic challenges).

How?
The role of CIPMEN is to identify and support strong and innovative entrepreneurial projects. For example, in the case of e-Takara, the incubator guarantees support to the winners over a two to three-year period to better structure their projects and develop their activities.

In order to facilitate the Niger 2.0 program, ANSI and CIPMEN worked together to foster a more favorable ecosystem by pooling their efforts. To achieve this, several actions were prioritized:
- Facilitation of access to financing for startups: this was achieved by setting up a digital fund powered by ANSI, and operated by CIPMEN in light of its expertise in this area;
- Facilitation of access to markets: via the implementation of support tools (guarantee funds, assistance in calls for tenders, etc.) and the consolidation of subcontracting partnerships with multinationals in the sector (Microsoft, Huawei, etc.);
- Facilitation of access to talent: via business and tech training;
- Adaptation of regulations: via joint workshops in order to adapt public regulations to the challenges of modern entrepreneurship;
- Awareness building on modern entrepreneurship: via events such as open houses and competitions like e-Takara to promote the use of ICT en masse to develop innovative solutions.

With regards to activities related to the emergence of Smart Villages, ANSI and CIPMEN are developing two concepts as part of their collaboration: a "digital volunteering" program and a "digital solidarity" program. The first project's purpose is to collect applications for volunteers to contribute their professional expertise to the Niger 2.0 program (remote medical consultations, online education, advisory in agricultural practices, etc.). The goal of the second project is to allow less affluent social groups to access and acquire mobile devices (smartphones, laptops, etc.) that volunteers would offer them at nominal prices/lower cost.

Outcomes:
- 1 national competition, including for the Nigerien diaspora;
- 5 project holders incubated at the end of the e-Takara competition;
- $90,000 seed funding for e-Takara winners.

Status: Operational since June 2017 - date of signature of the partnership agreement.

6. BBURKINA STARTUPS – WHEN A PUBLIC FUNDING PROGRAM ADAPTS ITS INTERVENTION METHODS TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

Who?
- Country: Burkina Faso;
- Agency: Burkina Faso Fund for Economic and Social Development (FBDES);
- Public and private partners: Incubators and entrepreneurship support actors (La Fabrique, SIRA Labs, Centre de Gestion Agréé, SMEs Restructuring Center of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, etc.), representatives of public authorities (National Agency for Promotion of ICT, Presidency, etc.), banks, etc.

What?
The Burkinabe Government has defined its National Economic and Social Development Plan for the 2016-2020 period. This broad economic and social recovery plan includes the launch of the Burkina Startups program, led by the Burkina Faso Fund for Economic and Social Development (FBDES). Convinced that lack of funding represents a major obstacle to the development of innovative companies in Burkina Faso, this program seeks to resolve this common problem. Its objective is to identify and offer financial support to 100 innovative startups per year for five years in order to create 10,000 jobs in Burkina Faso.

How?
After launching a wide call for projects, FBDES selected the winners on the basis of written proposals (submitted via an online platform) and physical interviews, examined and conducted by FBDES and its partners. These recipients benefited from a form of funding that has never been tested before by a public body in Burkina Faso: equity (in the range of US$4,000 to US$18,000 for a maximum investment duration of 5 years) coupled with loans (from US$4,000 to US$70,000).

Outcomes:
In 2017, the first year of its implementation, 12 startups were able to benefit from Burkina Startups funding (amounts not reported to date).

Lessons learnt:
- The notion of innovation is not fully understood by founders: In the first round of the program, 400 out of 421 proposals did not meet the eligibility criteria. In response, a more in-depth communication and awareness campaign was carried out for the 2018 round (in collaboration with numerous players in the field), resulting in more than twice the number of projects pre-selected for the 2nd competition.
- Innovative startups are not numerous, particularly in a country like Burkina Faso. This justifies the decrease in beneficiaries of the program or to spread them differently over time.
- There is still untapped potential: Many entrepreneurs have ideas that could make an impact, but they need more support to better structure their ideas and access to finance. Burkina Startups alone cannot provide funding, which is why the program must be coupled with coaching.

- Partnerships between the private and public sectors to support entrepreneurship are possible, as long as the programs are anchored in institutions that have a certain level of flexibility.
- Incubators are good instruments to identify and coach innovative startups and therefore must be integrated into the very heart of such public-private partnerships to support entrepreneurs. For example, in the context of Burkina Startups, incubators did not only prove to be relevant actors in identifying entrepreneurs but also participated in the design of the selection process as well as the competition itself by actively participating in juries.
- Financing conditions include agreeing to open up the startups' capital to FBDES and/or other potential investors, which can be a challenge for entrepreneurs who want to maintain their autonomy. This mechanism also changes the mentality of the public institution involved, as it must generally adapt its modus operandi once it invests in a company. It goes without saying, of course, that total transparency in the selection and funding process is critical to the success of the program.

7. LAUNCH OF THE FIRST FACEBOOK COMMUNITY SPACE IN AFRICA

Who?
- Incubator: CcHUb;
- Multinational, financial partner: Facebook.

What?
CcHUB is an innovation and incubation lab in Nigeria, designed to catalyze creative technology companies that serve the common good. Its goal is to co-create new solutions to solve the many social problems in Nigeria, implicating social entrepreneurs, impact investors, governments, hackers and ICT specialists.

In 2018, Facebook partnered with CcHUB to create NG_Hub - a multi-faceted space that brings together developers, startups, creatives and the community as a whole to collaborate, learn and exchange ideas.

Intended to attract the best talent and stimulate innovation in Nigeria's tech ecosystem, a number of training programs have been put in place to equip Nigerian SMEs, tech entrepreneurs and the next generation of leaders to better use digital tools and understand their potential for economic growth. The FbStart Accelerator program – an off-shoot of NG Hub – is a research and mentorship program seeking to empower startups and students. This program provides technical and commercial support, as well as funding to optimize the solutions beneficiaries are developing. These must be advanced technologies, with a focus on artificial intelligence, machine learning, augmented reality and virtual reality.

How?
Designed to help startups and students obtain technical and commercial support and optimize their products for growth, this accelerator program provides funding and support for 6 months.

Students teams accepted into the program will receive:
I. Non-equity financing: From $5,000 to $15,000 depending on the level of training (from Bachelor to Doctorate-level);
II. Support: Product development, business strategy and preparation for investment;
III. Access to technical experts and mentors from the Facebook and CcHUB network;
IV. Possible access to office space and Internet broadband in partner centers;
V. A flexible program that is designed to take students' academic obligations into account.

Startups accepted in the program will receive:
I. Non-equity financing: $20,000;
II. Support: Product development, business strategy, financial management and investment preparation;
III. Access to technical experts and mentors from the Facebook and CcHUB network;
IV. An office space with high speed Internet, meeting rooms and more.

Status: Operational since July 2018.

8. COMBINING INNOVATION AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN DAKAR

Who?
- International community: makesense Africa;
- Business school: the African Institute of Management (IAM).

What?
makeSense is a community of 30,000 volunteers, 2,000 social entrepreneurs and hundreds of private and public organizations around the world who are committed to tackling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through engagement, collaboration and entrepreneurship in more than 100 cities worldwide.

Since 2014, makesense opened an office in Dakar, Senegal – makesense Africa. One of its flagship programs is conducted in partnership with the African Institute of Management (IAM), with the purpose of transforming the university into a hub for social innovation. makesense develops activities dedicated to students and lecturers, as well as a wide variety of activities to create an ecosystem of innovation and collaboration around higher education.

How?
In the Dakar office, the team consists of 5 permanent members, accompanied by volunteers from the community. The three main activities are:

- Inspire, engage and equip citizens and students to become committed actors for change to make a difference in their society;
- Source and support the development of entrepreneurs through pre-incubation and incubation programs;
- Support large organizations in the development of multi-stakeholder collaborations, as well as foster open innovation.

Outcomes:

- 3,000 students inspired and trained to use the tools of open innovation and collective intelligence developed by makesense;
- 1 makesense community of ambassadors (10 young people) established, 5 of whom are professional facilitators of innovation workshops today;
- 50 events organized every year, which are open to the general public to discover social entrepreneurship and empower anyone and everyone;
- 40 high-impact entrepreneurs supported;
- 10 open innovation events and multi-stakeholder collaborations organized in partnership with the World Food Program, the International Monetary Fund and Eiffage.

Status: Operational since 2014 in Dakar, Senegal.

9. PUTTING SCIENCE AT THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY

Who?

- A research led institute: IRD;
- Three operational campuses:
  - In France, in Bondy, along with partners from the global South and diaspora, the Bond'innov incubator, local authorities and a group of social enterprises;
  - In Senegal, in Dakar, supporting the development and monitoring of hybrid projects that have societal impact, as well as organizing co-creation events such as Parfao, with local universities, the Agency of Francophonie Universities and economic partners and civil society;
  - In Burkina Faso, in Ouagadougou, with funding from the French Embassy, the support of So Science and partners in the region (ANVAR, FONRID, the Factory, CIRAD) and housed today in the public youth center Maison des Jeunes.

What?
The IRD founded the Innovation Campuses to encourage opening research to society at large, increasing shared knowledge, boosting exchanges and bringing researchers, social enterprises, incubators, living labs, NGOs and citizens together to tackle social and economic issues. The objective is to encourage these diverse actors to meet, talk and enrich themselves by exchanging experiences and co-creating projects, where research accompanies the development of solutions to meet the challenges of today's world. These campuses create the necessary environment for responsible innovation that benefits societies of both the global South and developed countries.

An innovation campus is therefore a space for partnership research, awareness, training, experimentation, support and incubation. Typically equipped with infrastructure conducive to dialogue, creativity and experimentation, innovation campuses also have a staff of facilitation teams supported by researchers and partners. The purpose of their program is to test new approaches, provide creativity tools and foster collaboration and support to the development of innovative ideas and projects.

How?
Among the tools mobilized to harness collective creativity and co-creation is the CoLAB - the first collaborative laboratory for responsible innovation. It was developed in partnership with makeSense and Bond'innov. It allows for the testing of co-creation methods and fosters knowledge sharing within a community of committed actors in order to collectively develop innovative high-impact solutions.

Outcomes:

- Within 6 months of collaboration between the major players in food security in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, CoLAB has brought together more than 500 people at 15 events to train fifteen students and a dozen local ambassadors, as well as facilitate the emergence of five innovative collaborative projects that are now being supported.

Status: Operational since June 2016

10. INNOVATING FOR ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER IN BURKINA FASO

Who?
- A technical partner and a donor: The Antenna Foundation;
- An incubator: La Fabrique.

What?
Access to drinking water is far from guaranteed in a country like Burkina Faso. This is partially due to the fact that there are many sources of water pollution, even in areas connected to the drinking water supply network.

In addition, the need for water disinfection products to prevent diarrheal diseases is far from being met. Products on the market are either of unpredictable quality or are too expensive for the general population.

Nevertheless, there are solutions. Among them are the products developed by the Antenna Foundation. In order to disseminate the results of its research as far as possible, the Antenna Foundation approached the La Fabrique incubator to identify and support social entrepreneurs who could benefit from the Foundation's tools.

To raise awareness, an "Innovating for access to drinking water in Burkina Faso!" day was organized by La Fabrique in Ouagadougou in 2017. This was an opportunity to bring together students, experts and entrepreneurs in a series of creativity-based workshops, where nearly 80 participants started social enterprises to market chlorine-based water purification solutions. One project, BILADA, stood out and won the opportunity to be supported for one year by the incubator.

How?
BILADA has been incubated at La Fabrique since April 2018. It aims to facilitate access to drinking water for everyone in Burkina Faso through the production and sale of chlorinated solutions. BILADA receives technical and commercial advice with the support of a right-hand man provided by La Fabrique - a support officer available part-time, who also assists with communications and fundraising. It also benefits from the technical support of the Antenna Foundation, which – beyond acting as a sponsor - has opened up its knowledge to the BILADA team, allowing it to use its equipment and facilities when necessary.

Outcomes:
- 2 market studies conducted;
- 2 developed products;
- 1 initial network of structured partners;
- $18,000 raised in the form of an interest-free loan to finance the development of a pilot phase.

Status: Operational since February 2017.

11. BACKING AN INVESTMENT FUND TO AN INCUBATOR

Who?
- An incubator: Co-creation Hub (CcHub) in Nigeria;
- Co-investors: Nigeria's Bank of Industry, Venture Garden Group and Omidyar Network.

What?
In 2017, CcHUB launched an investment company backed by its incubator with a co-investment by the Bank of Industry of Nigeria, Venture Garden Group and Omidyar Network. The fund invests between $50,000 and $150,000 in early-stage or developed startups (with a potential increase of $200,000 to $500,000) with innovative technological solutions that address local challenges in Nigeria and have regional/global potential.

CcHUB invests in strong founding teams that have been working together for over a year and have had consistent revenue for over twelve months. The goal of the investment is to support initial growth, team building and market expansion. They generally act as the first local institutional investors that get targeted businesses off the ground.

How?
Startups that benefit from this seed funding are also offered:
- Access to co-financing and loans: Links with financial institutions and partner investors to help increase the amount of available funding as needed.
- Strategic advice: The CcHUB team provides hands-on support to help businesses build their team, develop and implement appropriate processes and adopt an efficient governance structure to facilitate a good level of growth. Expertise in product development is also provided.
- A network: CcHUB brings the wealth of its partnerships and relationships to the businesses that are already financed, which can play a big role in determining growth and distribution.
- Offices: CcHUB offers entrepreneurs the ideal environment to prosper and grow their businesses. Located in the heart of the metropolis of Lagos, it allows entrepreneurs to stay in touch with their markets and encourages peer-to-peer engagement.

Outcomes:
- Funds raised (1st round): $1,000,000;
- Invested funds: $325,000;
- 3 beneficiary startups.

Status: The "Growth Capital Fund" by CcHUB is active and is currently raising a new round of funding to increase the number of startups to invest in in Nigeria and across Africa.

12. PILOTING INTEREST-FREE LOANS FOR INNOVATIVE STARTUPS

Who?
- An international donor organization: French Development Agency (AFD);
- An innovative program: Afric'innov;
- Incubators to pilot the instrument: CTIC Dakar (Senegal), CIPMEN (Niger), Etrilabs (Benin), La Fabrique (Burkina Faso), Saboutech (Guinea);
- Local experts: In each country, a selection committee is made up of local experts in the field of startup financing. Each pilot incubator also partners with an independent financial auditor and a collection officer.

What?
Startups find it very difficult to raise the necessary funds in their first years of commercial activity. Available funds are often unsuited to entrepreneurs' constraints (low cash flow, lack of collateral, etc.). The mechanism of the interest-free loan can answer this problem but it must be granted to trusted people that can be monitored regularly. This financing mechanism, which is particularly new, is being tested via 5 pilot incubators acting as trusted intermediaries to pre-select entrepreneurs among their incubees and track beneficiaries afterwards.

How?
€450,000 are made available by AFD for the experimentation of this fund over a two-year period. Implicated incubators have several missions: sourcing of startups, support for entrepreneurs, mobilization of the committee and tracking repayments.

The terms of the interest-free loans are as follows: loans from €10,000 to €30,000 repayable over 24 to 36 months, without interest and without guarantee. The loan is awarded to the entrepreneur (and not to the company) to finance the development of commercial activities.

Outcomes:
- Training to explain the system and build the skills of the teams in charge of setting-up the Afric'innov fund in various incubators;
- A kit containing all the documents to be used and tutorials to facilitate the deployment of the fund;
- A formalized and integrated process by the pilot incubators in their support methodology;
- A first committee was organized in March 2018: 10 projects financed for average amounts of €15,000;
- A target of 30 projects financed by the end of the pilot phase in 2019.

Status: Operational since 2018.

13. ACCELERATING STARTUP GROWTH ON THE CONTINENT: XL AFRICA

Who?
- An international organization: the World Bank Group;
- Donor governments: Finland, Norway and Sweden;
- Operational partners: IMC Worldwide, VC4Africa, Koltai & Co (for the first round).

What?
XL Africa aims to help 20 of the most investable startups in sub-Saharan Africa succeed in their Series A fundraising ($500,000 to $1.5 million).

This accelerator program is designed for very fast-growing startups that offer a product or service with a strong technology component currently available in one or more African markets, and that have already raised seed funds (for example from angel investors) with strong development potential across the region and around the world.

How?
XL Africa selected 20 African startups (using a panel of investors) and offered them the following for 5 months:
- **Advisory services:** Access to experienced mentors, consisting of international and African entrepreneurs, experts and investors;
- **Training:** Online courses, access to a global repository of information, international and African case studies, tools and contacts;
- **A residency:** Two weeks immersion in an all-expenses-paid intensive training course in Cape Town, South Africa, with African ecosystem players and communities of investors;
- **Visibility:** Highlighting startups within the World Bank network, among major technology companies that are active in Africa (e.g. Google, Orange, Microsoft, Thomson Reuters, etc.), as well as media partners;
- **Access to capital:** Introduction to confirmed and proven investors and support for raising capital up to $1.5 million.

Outcomes:

- 900 applicants from sub-Saharan Africa, 20 startups selected from 8 countries;
- $13 million investments raised.

Status: First edition completed in 2017, second edition in preparation for 2018.

14. From Accra to Silicon Valley: a springboard proposed by MEST

Who?

- Training program, investment and incubator network for tech startups: MEST (headquartered in Ghana, with regional offices in Lagos, Cape Town and Nairobi);
- Private partners: Vodafone, Barclays Bank, MTN, etc.
- Accelerator programs around the world: YCombinator, Techstars, Tech Crunch, 500 Startups, Startup Bootcamp, Startup Chile, etc.

What?

MEST has created more than 40 companies in its 10-year history, founded by graduates of the MEST training program in Accra. Ghana has long been regarded as a formidable market for launching businesses, primarily due to its political stability, major universities promoting young talent and the country's various industries demanding new technologies.

Several large companies have a strong interest in Ghana's startup ecosystem, particularly in the areas of communications, banking and insurance. Since its inception, MEST has worked closely with partners such as Vodafone, Barclays Bank and MTN.

Though partnerships with companies have long been the only opportunity for startups to propel themselves into new markets, more and more programs are offering local startups an opportunity to excel on the international stage and expand their markets.

How?

The most prestigious acceleration programs have selected startups from MEST: Tech Crunch Disrupt, 500 Startups, Y Combinator and Techstars, based in the United States, but also Startup Chile in Chile and Startup Bootcamp in South Africa.

Partnerships with these accelerators not only bring value to entrepreneurs in terms of financing, but also boost their visibility. They provide access to a large network of mentors from the technology industry that startups would otherwise not be able to access from Africa. Success is therefore more easily attained. In just a short time, African entrepreneurship has transformed its innovations in local solutions to the world stage (e.g. mobile money).

Outcomes:

- 273 entrepreneurs trained and incubated;
- 52 startups invested in by MEST and international venture capital funds.

15. Building bridges between a multinational corporation and startups in Nigeria

Who?

- A multinational: Union Bank;
- An incubator: CcHub.

What?

In 2017, the multinational Union Bank called on CcHub, a social innovation center dedicated to innovation and technology, to discover high-potential startups to be considered for business partnerships.

For Union Bank, the aim was to take advantage of locally-established startups to provide a better service to its customers and even employees, thereby increasing its market share. The winning startups would be able to quickly develop their markets by tapping into Union Bank's customer base (over 3.7 million people) and relying on its 350 branches present across the country.

How?

After a call for applications, 12 startups were preselected by CcHUB, on the basis of their current portfolios and potential value proposition in line with the bank's strategy and business model. Finalists were mentored for 2 days by CcHUB to assist them in preparing their pitch in the best possible way. The bank's top management - together with about 40 employees - attended the presentations and questions, demonstrating the strong level of interest in this program. 3 startups were selected on the basis of their value proposition, in line with the bank's strategy.

CcHUB then played the role of honest broker and mentor to the startups who committed themselves to delivering a proof of concept within 3 months.

Outcome:

- 720 startups applied for the program;
- 12 startups were selected and tutored to pitch in front of Union Bank's top managers;
- 3 startups signed commercial partnerships with Union Bank.

For the Nigerian technology ecosystem: This program proves that local businesses are able to meet the needs of large companies, while equally meeting the needs of ordinary Nigerians and making a profit.

Status: Closed.

16. REINVENTING THE BANK OF TOMORROW WITH THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

Who?

- A multinational company: Société Générale;
- A collaborative space: Jokkolabs;
- An open innovation consultancy: Bluenove.

What?

Société Générale wants to be a key player in the coming banking revolution in Africa, in light of changing banking and consumption practices on the continent. In 2016, Société Générale's Innovation Lab for sub-Saharan Africa was set up to pursue this ambition of injecting innovation into its African subsidiaries.

How?

Following the "Innov'Days" hackathon dedicated to improving customer experience in local branches, Société Générale announced the opening of its Innovation Lab for sub-Saharan Africa, based in Dakar, at the Jokkolabs office. This space for innovation and coworking has opened its ecosystem and plays the role of trusted third party between the bank and startups. The Jokkolabs team, as well as the consultancy Bluenove, provides strategic advice and operational support to ensure the visibility of the Lab (access to trade shows, BtoB meetings) and the hosting of events (bootcamps, hackathons, etc.). It also supports the incubation of innovative business ventures selected by the bank, whether they are proposed by entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs.

Outcomes:

- 2 hackathons (Dakar, Abidjan), 1 virtual hackathonand 1 innovation fair (Accra);
- 3 startup projects purchased by subsidiaries;
- 4 incubated startups;
- 3 employees' projects in the acceleration phase.

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