

Cooperative Incubation Centres for African Countries - A Way Forward for Social Entrepreneurship Development

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SUMMARY

Africa's potential as a growth market for business remains both underestimated and misunderstood—as does the potential for business to play a transformative role in solving the continent's biggest challenges. Africa's fast-growing population and markets present important opportunities for business in an environment of slowing global growth. At the same time, greater innovation and investment from business is essential to meet Africa's unfulfilled demand for goods and services, close the gaps in its infrastructure, create jobs, and decrease poverty. The article gives the roadmap for the African Countries to develop Self Reliant Incubation System through mobilizing and implementing innovative steps from Startup Institution Building, Policy and Advocacy for Startup Ecosystem, Incubators and Incubation Infrastructure development, Business Formation and Sustainable Enterprises and cooperative incubation moves. The article showcase the India's limelight towards the startup ecosystem building and its way forward to form sustainable enterprises through cooperative incubation centers. The need of innovations and investment for business can be achieved in Africa through the vital setup of incubation centres at every startup destinations.

INTRODUCTION

According to a World Bank report, Africa now earns an average of 24% of its annual revenues from its farmers and their crops. The African Agribusiness Incubation Conference organized under the umbrella of African Agribusiness Incubator Network (AAIN) report projected that if public and private sectors were to work together to link farmers with consumers in what the report referred to as “an increasingly urbanized Africa”, agriculture in Africa is likely to be worth US\$1 trillion by 2030.¹ “The key to transforming agriculture in Africa depends on how Africa prioritizes and treats agriculture as a business as opposed to treating it as a way of life. A shift towards commercialization of agriculture should be the new narrative and reiterated the importance of the conference in showcasing the new platform for both the public and private sectors. Incubators are emerging rapidly to support a new generation of young entrepreneurs. Despite their huge potential, however, incubators are just one of many players in a typical entrepreneurial ecosystem. So it is increasingly important that incubators in addition to allocating the necessary resources, services and funding to worthy start-ups provide them with a platform to share and transfer knowledge across the ecosystem, not only with each other but also with the investors, research centers and industry experts upon which their businesses will ultimately depend.^{1&6} Incubators setup in Africa can be road mapped with following attire, to achieve the building blocks of the startups and creation of sustainable enterprise through cooperative incubation centres.

Startup Institution Building

Likewise India, Startup Institutional Building must be developed from the schools, colleges, institutions, universities technical, non-technical and other relevant ecosystem supporting innovations, technology transfer moves, capacity building in startup universe in African continent. For example: In Education parameter, UGC, AICTE (Institution Innovation Council), Ministry of Education, Govt. of India has established its ‘Innovation Cell’ at All India Council for Technical Education with a purpose of systematically fostering the culture of Innovation in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country. MoE's Innovation Cell (MIC) is focusing to create and strengthen the culture of Innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem across all HEIs to enable them in promoting and supporting student innovations and sustainable start-ups from academic institutions. MoE's Innovation Cell has launched and implementing various policy programs such as Smart India Hackathon, International Hackathons, Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA), establishment of Institution's Innovation Councils (IICs) and National Innovation and Start-up Policy (NISIP) for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to engage, encourage and channelize the creative energy and entrepreneurial potential of Indian youths to build innovations and enterprises.^{3&4}

Policy and Advocacy for Startup Ecosystem

The 'National Student and Faculty Startup Policy-2019' of India is initiated by Ministry of Human Resource and Development MHRD's Innovation Cell and AICTE. It is a guiding framework to envision an educational system oriented toward start-ups and entrepreneurship opportunities for students and faculties. The guidelines provide ways for developing entrepreneurial agenda, managing Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) ownership, technology licensing, and equity sharing in Start-ups or enterprises established by faculty and student and encourage them to actively pursue the path of innovation and entrepreneurship. The vision is to develop high-quality technical human resources capable of doing cutting-edge research and innovation and deep-tech entrepreneurship.

In same lines, African Education Ecosystem can channelize a flexible Student and Faculty Startup Policy which will gear up the momentum of startups development and sustainability.⁴

Incubators and Incubation Infrastructure Development

As per the sectors from agriculture, industry and service sectors, fully fledged technical (Technical Business Incubators) and non-technical (Business Incubators, Livelihood Business Incubators) may be developed in the Research, Academics and Industry base institutions in African continent. For example, under Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in India with the ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research, State Agricultural Universities, Directorate of Research etc.) every entity have their unique set up of Incubation centre with their mandate, principle, vision and milestones developed to do invent, innovative and transfer of technologies for the stakeholders depending on agriculture and allied activities. The funding required for the infrastructure or ecosystem setup may be given to the institutions/organizations which can lead to win-win situation for the educational and innovation/incubation set up.

Business Formation and Sustainable Enterprises

With the above, Startup Institution Building, Policy and Advocacy for Startup Ecosystem, Incubators and Incubation Infrastructure development, Africa will have a trained/incubated manpower/startups having sound knowledge of business acumen, this businesses can be moved for further institution building through cooperatives/collectives. The handholding, business vision, fundraising, profit with sustainable enterprises will be accelerated by collaborating good startups/entrepreneurs with cooperative principles and encouraged to run the business collectively and or in cooperative attributes.

Cooperative incubation and its need of hour

The Government of India, with encouraging steps to diverse the business dogmas of the cooperative entities, like Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies, Dairy Cooperative Societies, Fishery Cooperative Societies, Seed Cooperative Societies, Organic Cooperative Societies and Export Cooperative Societies have enriched the role of incubators in handholding and creating sustainable enterprises through cooperative business models. The same vision and mission may be taken by African Union through cooperative ecosystem in the African countries. The viable resources, trained manpower, new skills and tactics, larger avenues of innovations which are abundant in the African continent can be explored through the cooperative incubation space.

Way forward

Africa, where every country culture, origin, resources are so unique and reliable, it leads to a startup formation. A way forward in the Incubation ecosystem, Africa must work on Startup Institution Building, Policy and Advocacy for Startup Ecosystem, Incubators and Incubation Infrastructure development, Business Formation and Sustainable Enterprises and cooperative incubation moves. This all together if achieved will lead to better path and desired road map of socioeconomic development of stakeholders in Africa and all around the globe.

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