

IAF BUSINESS INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (E6)
Entrepreneurship Around the World (5-GTS.1)

Author: Ms. Kaitlyn Holm
University of Pennsylvania, United States

Mr. Richard Kerby
United Arab Emirates

AN ANALYSIS OF SPACE SECTOR ENTREPRENEURIAL CHALLENGES IN AFRICAN NATIONS
AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Abstract

The paper will compare, study, and analyze the different challenges entrepreneurs face in countries in Africa and the Middle East. The work is based on a series of hackathons, trainings, and events led by the authors to facilitate entrepreneurship opportunities with young people in Africa and the Middle East. The study encompasses entrepreneurs from a variety of backgrounds: professional, college students, and community members; and from both developed and developing countries. The authors themselves bring a diverse perspective on these issues. The study highlights cross-cultural similarities and differences in entrepreneurs in the MENA region, while offering a unique and insightful perspective on commonalities these entrepreneurs share. An in-depth analysis of entrepreneurs in the U.A.E. is also provided.

The research is based on a unique training program to provide access to and the use of open space data in countries in Africa and the Middle East. Seven national events, training sessions, and national hackathons were created in Uganda, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates. More than 4000 people have been trained through these programs and hundreds of projects have been created in the hackathons, many of which use open space data. These projects using satellite data range from topics on improving agriculture, fighting corruption, reducing poverty, and mitigating the impact of climate change. Partnerships with local universities, the national government, and tech companies and startups are crucial to ensuring the success of these events, and the ability for the young people who are trained to find employment or start their ventures.

This paper identifies the commonalities and challenges in nation-specific entrepreneurship while presenting practiced and accessible solutions. Importantly, it will also discuss unexpected roadblocks as well as successful outcomes in entrepreneurial development in open space data and effective training methods, particularly in looking at the global south, developing countries, and new entrants to the aerospace field.