Five African tech hubs you didn't know about

By Gabriella Mulligan   22 Dec 2015

2015 has seen the rise of vibrant tech hubs in places even we didn't expect them. The growth of the pan-African innovation ecosystem - and seeing proof that the whole continent is being included in the growth story - is exactly the sort of news we love. So, just in case you missed them, here are five African hubs you probably didn't know about.

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Habaka - Madagascar

Habaka was founded in 2011 - the first innovation hub in Madagascar. It offers co-working space, runs events and offers training, while since September 2014 it has also been running the CoderDojo programme. However, this year Habaka stepped up the pace, embarking on consultations with the Malagasy government on how best to grow the technology ecosystem in the country.

"The government and the Economic Development Board of Madagascar had to submit an application for a proposal to the African Development Bank, and asked for input from us for the first time," Habaka co-founder and chief executive officer (CEO) Andriankoto Ratozamanana told Disrupt Africa. "We think it's meaningful consideration for us and a sign of openness. Working with the government through different ministries is key in our mission of reshaping Madagascar's economy through technology."

Africa House - Somalia

In April, Dutch NGO Spark and a team of partners launched the Africa House business incubator and entrepreneurship development centre in Hargeisa, Somalia, the first such project in the Somali regions.

Hargeisa is the capital of Somaliland, an autonomous region in northwestern Somalia, and the new incubator aims to support local entrepreneurs through training, mentoring, and access to in-house services such as secretarial, administrative and office space. Africa House also provides a business incubation service which aims to help lower the operating costs of startup businesses. Online business portal Koobe was named the winner of the inaugural demo day held at the end of the first incubation programme, walking away with US$2,500 in prize money.

mHub - Malawi

Launched in 2013, mHub is the first tech incubator in the southern African country of Malawi, and places a special focus on building young technology entrepreneurs through training, skills development and mentorship. This year the hub announced the target of taking on and training 5,000 young entrepreneurs by 2019.

Co-founders Rachel Sibande, Austin Madinga and Angel Chirwa say there is enough entrepreneurial potential in the country to turn it into a force to be reckoned with in the region.

Jokkolabs - the Gambia

West African co-working group Jokkolabs opened a new space in Banjul, the Gambia, in May - the first co-working space in the country. Manager of Jokkolabs Banjul, Therese Mam Kangu Keita told Disrupt Africa the new space was opened with the intention of providing young people in the Gambia with the facilities to develop as entrepreneurs, and implement projects that can effect social change.

"The Gambia has a population of about 1.8 million people, 46.5 per cent of which is literate. And the majority of the youth who are literate are unemployed," Keita said.

"We want to change the status quo and propel young people into a mindset where they do not wait for the government to solve their unemployment issues. We want to help cultivate a generation not to think as future employees but as future entrepreneurs."

FocusHub - Nigeria

The Nigerian city of Port Harcourt became home to a new Niger Delta-based incubator, FocusHub, this year. The technology entrepreneurship and social innovation hub has a mandate of creating sustainable business models dedicated to solving developmental challenges in the Niger Delta.

The non-profit community aims to provide a space for startups, SMEs, entrepreneurs, IT developers, impact investors, students and corporates to meet and interact for the purpose of technology and knowledge transfer, mentoring, training, incubation and networking. In October it opened applications to first six-month incubation programme.

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