



## **Innovation Week-end in Francophone West Africa**

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

#### **BACKGROUND**

By 2020, 250 million Africans will be between 15 and 24 years old. Africa's challenge is not only to create jobs fast enough to keep pace with this population growth but also to equip everyone with the skills to join a productive workforce.

About 90% of Africa's jobs are in the informal economy, associated with low-productivity, low-quality and low-paid jobs. Lack of "decent" employment, along with high unemployment, socio-economic and gender inequalities has contributed to high poverty levels among Africa's youth and women. Indeed, most young Africans are either unemployed, underemployed in low-productivity household enterprises. According to International Labour Organization (ILO), 60% of the unemployed in Sub-Saharan Africa are 15–24 years old—and on average 72% of the youth live on less than \$2 a day, 46% less than a \$1 a day. The most affected group is that of young women who suffer disproportionately from unemployment or access to jobs which keep them under the poverty line. A lack of technical and employable skills, information on jobs and access to capital has limited young people's abilities to fully use their skills and contribute to the dynamism of the economy.

The technology revolution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is transforming the development landscape. In the African context, many countries and communities are looking at technology to accelerate inclusive growth in all the spheres of social economic development. Young adults have been at the center of this discourse, with technology being viewed as a tool to deliver better social and economic development outcomes.

The numbers tell it all, compared to a decade and a half ago technology uptake in Africa was at its infancy, by 2015, over 50% of the continents population actively use mobile phones. The rate of Internet users has increased 100 folds to 20%, and over 100 Million Africans use online social media.

This influx in use of technology has made it clear that the online landscape isn't traditional, it has fewer barriers, and it provides a completely new way to break through, serve lots of people and make a major difference. For youth and women, this new reality provides an opportunity to completely bypass traditional power structures. They now have the power to reach more individuals, build stronger communities and have a greater growth than ever before.

Technologies have created new means of job creation, and new types of jobs. Technologies have made entrepreneurship easy enabling environment for good-quality job creation for Africa's youth remains crucial for promoting economic growth, productivity, innovation and employment.

#### **PROJECT**

The Special Envoy on Gender's office (SEOG) and the Gender and Social Development Monitoring Division (ORQR.4) will host an innovation week-end that aims at finding technology based solutions to improve the quality of life of the people of Africa. In doing so, the event will focus on two themes namely (i) Increasing financial inclusion and (ii) Fostering skills development for employment.

The event that seeks to attract a range of youths from West Africa and the diaspora, seeks to introduce innovative approaches in designing, developing and implementing technology based interventions for Africa's growth. The event will have participation from 10 West African Countries, as well as Bank staff. The goal is attracting 50% participation of youth and women in order to increase its impact on the participants and 50% AfDB Staff Members who will form joint teams to tackle a challenge in one of the themes.

The 3 days event (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) will apply several methodologies including group work, workshop and keynote addresses from eminent speakers to stimulate and collect youth ideas.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Enable youth to take ownership of development issues and provide technology related sustainable solutions;
- Promote the development of the tech environment in francophone West Africa to stimulate economic and social progress for African youth; and
- Gather the young Africans men and women around a unifying project to enhance regional integration and gender equality through collaborative work.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Select 3 projects that are viable and support them through the funding process;
- Establish of a collaborative group gathering young people involved in the development of the tech environment in francophone Africa; and
- Produce a video report containing the week-end's highlights for advocacy purposes.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Due to its regional scope, implementing this project requires an inclusive approach. Thus partners from different backgrounds will participate in the project's success. The following is a non-exhaustive list of areas of partnership (in alphabetical order)

- **Academic:** Due to their position of "knowledge brokers" and because they have vocations to educate the African youth, higher education institutions are key partners;
- **Institutional:** Institutions, be they national, regional or international, are important players in the development of Africa to the extent that they define strategies and policies, finance and implement development projects;
- **Media:** Given the nature of the project, which aims to bring together young Africans both on the continent and in the Diaspora, it is essential to have adequate coverage. This includes both institutional media (radio, TV, web, etc.) and alternative media (citizen journalists, activists, blogger, etc.);
- **Private sector:** Private sector is called to be a driving force for African development. The professional expertise and the knowledge of field realities are a valuable asset for young project holders who would benefit from a mentoring program that supports them; and
- **Civil Society:** Civil society has among its members a large number of specialists of the topics to be discussed during the event. In addition, members of the civil society are also a great information relay to increase the reach of the initiative and adapt it to local conditions.

## CONFIRMED PARTNERS

- **Tech of Africa :** To provide all digital communication, including the landing page for the event, live tweeting, video report and posters/leaflets for the event
- **Google:** Provide design thinking facilitator for the workshop
- **Sonatel:** Provide speaker support
- **ITU:**