



# THINK AFRICA

## Promoting and strengthening entrepreneurship among the Finnish-African community

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**Helsinki, October 2018** - The African community in Finland is very diverse in terms of countries of origin, capabilities, and interests. However, many people of African origin do not think it is possible to pursue any innovative or business idea to fruition in Finland. There are many reasons for this, but a big factor is the lack of information and visibility provided to people of African origin who had succeeded in pursuing ideas and creating businesses successfully. As Jimoh Biliaminu, CEO of Silicon Projects stated “The hardest part is to start.”

To address this, two successful events funded by FinCEAL were organized to promote and bring inspiration. The events presented business pioneers in Finland, and innovators stemming from university research. Thereby, encouraging the community to aspire beyond just getting any job but "aspire to do what you want to do" Eva Kagiri, FinCEAL.

The Think Africa *Doing Business in Finland – An African Conversation* event, which took place on the 24th of May, 2018 17:00-19:30, galvanized the African communities who may have ideas and wish to pursue them, and even start businesses. The goal of the panel was to introduce success stories, as an example of what has been done and can therefore be achieved. The event was opened by the Namibian Ambassador to Finland, H.E. Bonny Haufiku who gave the Keynote Speech to a crowd of over 40 participants.

The inspiration came from: Solomon Negash Dessie, Lincoln Kayiwa, Francis Oyeyiola, and Edem Agbekey-Taylor. Mr. Dessie has run a successful Ethiopian restaurant for more than one year. Mr. Oyeyiola is from Kpanlogo Yede, a multicultural association “that aims to promote diversity and create togetherness between all people, to create a positive societal impact”. Ms. Agbekey-Taylor is the founder of Inkuto which promotes indigenous African natural resources that are culturally, spiritually, economically and ecologically sustainable”. Mr. Kayiwa is an artist-cum-designer with many patented designs.



As Eva Kagiri summarized after the panel discussions, *"there are a lot of obstacles and barriers, but it's about how to overcome them and not use them as excuses to fail yourself... We should all take a leap and learn from these pioneers [the panel]."*



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The *From Academic Research and Ideas to Commercialization Workshop* event that took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018, 14:00-16:30, shared practical ideas on where to start commercializing research and student ideas (institutions or departments at the universities), how to commercialize research results, apply patent and other forms of protection of the concept, to information on how to secure funding. It presented successful cases and encouraged the students and researchers to use their researches to identify practical solutions for social challenges in home countries.



The event was structured into two participatory workshops which were lead and coached by Hannes Toivanen, CEO at Teqmine, Sara Kangaspeska from Helsinki Innovation Services Ltd., alongside African diasporas Jimoh Biliaminu (CEO at Silicon Projects Nigeria) and Arshe Said (Post-Doc researcher at University of Aalto). Throughout the workshops ideas and practical support was offered to participants.



*"Look beyond the thesis and see what you can do with your research"* Arshe Said advised the 24 participants that attended the event.

The event, co-organized by the Aalto University - Community of African Student (ACAS) and University of Eastern Finland - African Student Association was mainly attended by university students and researchers, as well as, participants from Non-governmental organizations, and from private companies. Furthermore, through the workshops, networks and connections between participants and Innovation service centers, and accelerators were established.

The future will see Think Africa organize more such events. *"There are many students who could benefit from these events"* Hannes Toivanen encouraged Think Africa.

**About:** Think Africa ry, is a not-for-profit organization that engages, promotes, and empowers the Finnish-African community for self-development and the development of Africa and Finland. We encourage, participate in, and host activities and events that are geared towards the fulfilment of this goal. For more information or to organize and support more of our events and activities, contact the Chairperson, Myriam Munezero at [myriam@thinkafrica.fi](mailto:myriam@thinkafrica.fi).

*"It is a good job that THINK AFRICA is doing to give benefits back to Africa. Keep it up!"* - Jimoh Biliaminu, CEO Silicon Projects.

