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AFRICELL AND LSE GIVE VOICE TO YOUNG AFRICAN INNOVATORS

Africell and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), one of the world's most prestigious universities, have teamed together to shine a spotlight on innovation trends in Africa through a live event in London



Held in the LSE's flagship Marshall Building on the edge of leafy Lincoln's Inn Fields in central London, the 'Innovating in Africa' event (co-hosted by Africell and the LSE's Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa) gave over 200 London-based students, graduates and young professionals a chance to explore opportunities to work in Africa, with an emphasis on the fields of technology, sustainability and creativity.

Africell is the only US-owned mobile network operator in Africa but its group headquarters are in London, from where it manages operations serving almost 20 million customers in Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia and Sierra Leone. LSE was established in 1895 and is the world's top social science-focused university, specialising in subjects including economics, management, politics and law. The Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa is the engine of LSE's engagement with Africa. LSE has a long history of training African scholars and leaders and 'Innovating in Africa' was borne out of a vision, shared by Africell, to fortify London's position as a launchpad for innovation, investment and entrepreneurship on the continent.

Ignoring the standard template of corporate networking events, 'Innovating in Africa' fused sharp analysis from emerging experts with an intelligently curated set of cultural experiences designed to resonate with a younger, more critical audience. In addition to a panel discussion in which speakers looked through an alternative lens at



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innovation in the African context, guests enjoyed a spoken word poetry performance by South African poet **Sechaba Nkitseng**, an Afro-fusion music performance by Nigerian artist **Tim Lyre**, and a live DJ set from LSE alumnus **Becca (WAAW)**.

Moderated by **Chandni Hirani** (Head of Africa Programmes at [LSE Generate](#)), the panel reviewed the innovation landscape in Africa today. **Bili Sule** (Founder and Chief Growth Engineer at [aIGROWithm](#)) distinguished between incremental and radical innovation and argued that although Africa has seen many small steps forward, it needs more giant leaps. **Charlotte Bwana** (VP of Africa Marketing and Brand Strategy for [Audiomack](#)) spoke about Africa's growing muscle as a creative powerhouse and considered what it will take for more African content to go global. **Alexis Akwagyiram** (Managing Editor of [Semafor Africa](#)) explained that from a journalist's point of view, the best innovation stories in Africa are those about specific problems being solved for real people. **Nell Lemaistre** (Head of Programme at the 100x Impact Accelerator) argued for the role of socially conscious entrepreneurship in Africa and outlined opportunities for startups available through the [100x Impact Accelerator](#). **Daniele Tricario** and **Simone Hinrichson** of the GSMA presented the findings of the GSMA's latest innovation report, which looks in detail at how the mobile sector propels social progress in Africa and other developing markets.

"The event's purpose was to explore innovation in Africa in a practical, rather than theoretical, way", says **Sam Williams**, Africell's UK-based group communications director. "If they didn't before, we wanted everyone to leave the room thinking that working in innovative fields Africa is both a realistic and appealing idea. Africell is London-based because London is a great springboard for investing and working in Africa. We wanted to communicate that message and inspire participants to view London as a starting point for work on the continent – whether in telecoms or any other innovative sector".

In addition to the panel and performances, a pop-up exhibition area saw partner organisations – including Clifford Chance, Google, the Africa Centre, the Royal African Society and the LSE Press – demonstrate their Africa-focused offerings and interact with a community of London-based young people actively interested in Africa-related issues. Food and drink had a contemporary African theme, with African Originals drinks – including Zobo and Lime cider from Nigeria, Dawa Honey cider from Zambia, Tropical fruit cider from Kenya and Mango and Chilli cider from Mali – fuelling a buzzy atmosphere.

Fadil Elobeid, Africa Engagement Programme Manager at the LSE Foroz Lalji Institute for Africa, says that LSE's collaboration Africell made for a successful event.

"Africell is a dynamic London-based business with active operations in several African markets", he explains. "LSE, meanwhile, prides itself on its diverse and engaged body of African students, and its track record of top-tier scholarship either by Africans or on Africa-related subjects. Combining all these elements in the event meant that participants benefitted from a fresh, relevant and action-orientated programme, the outcome of which is – hopefully – that they are more likely to think about Africa as a good place to pursue a career".

The 'Innovation in Africa' event was the first in a series of planned Africell x LSE initiatives, with preparations underway for an LSE Generate entrepreneurship training programme scheduled to take place in Sierra Leone and Gambia later in 2023.



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ABOUT AFRICELL

Africell provides mobile network coverage and related technology services to almost 20 million subscribers in sub-Saharan Africa. It operates in Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The only US-owned mobile network operator in Africa, Africell directly and indirectly employs more than 10,000 people.

Through the Africell Impact Foundation, Africell supports initiatives in the areas of education and entrepreneurship; arts, culture, and heritage; health, sports and wellbeing; and environment action and emergency relief. Its ambition is to narrow Africa's opportunity gap by linking people to the digital and physical resources they need to engage fully in community life.

www.africell.com

ABOUT LSE

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is the world's foremost social science university. It is a global community of people and ideas in the heart of central London. It ranks fifth in the world in the QS subject rankings 2023 and as the top university in London in the Complete University Guide 2024 and Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2023. LSE counts 18 Nobel Prize winners among its staff and former students. 37 world leaders have studied or taught at LSE. LSE currently has 12,000 full-time students from almost a hundred different countries.

The Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa (FLIA) focuses on LSE engagement with Africa through cutting-edge research, teaching and public events, strengthening LSE's long-term commitment to placing Africa at the heart of understandings and debates on global issues.

www.lse.ac.uk

