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**Innovation for African Universities programme helps young Kenyan entrepreneurs create successful long-term businesses**

### ***The British Council’s Innovation for African Universities programme helps support graduate entrepreneurs in Kenya***

There is no shortage of entrepreneurial spirit among young people in Kenya. However, many new enterprises fail in the first three years as young people often don’t have the skills needed for sustaining a successful business beyond the start-up phase.

The British Council’s Innovation for African Universities (IAU) programme is funding the Youth Entrepreneurship Accelerator Programme in Kenya, a partnership between The Technical University of Kenya, Kenyatta University, Northumbria University in the UK and the Entrepreneurship Educators Foundation for East Africa, to support young Kenyan entrepreneurs sustain their businesses and help them grow.

The Technical University of Kenya runs programmes in entrepreneurship as a mainstay of its curriculum. **Dr Pamela Mreji, Senior Lecturer, Technical University of Kenya, comments:** “Many Kenyans are becoming entrepreneurs as a source of income to sustain their family, because of the need to have something at the end of the month. There is no guarantee it will become a sustainable business as it is often not a well-evolved opportunity.”

Kenyatta University provides links to the world of work and other young entrepreneurs through its Innovation Centre. **Frederick Ndede, Senior Lecturer, Kenyatta University, adds:** “The major issue is the identification of the market, the second issue is lack of financial support, and the third issue is linking those young people with ideas to established, successful business owners who can give them guidance in what I call the joint venture ship.”

Academics from Northumbria University are sharing their knowledge of survival and growth for young businesses by providing input into the creation of an online portal for Kenyan entrepreneurs, which is particularly important for ensuring access to support for people in rural areas. This portal will be a hub of practical advice, case studies and access to mentors to help young people’s businesses survive and thrive, rooted in the experiences of successful Kenyan businesses. “We were very conscious not to take examples from the UK and other parts of the world and transplant them directly into Kenya,” adds **Alison Pearce, Associate Professor, Northumbria University**.

The portal is being built by the Entrepreneurship Educators Foundation, Eastern Africa. **Duncan Ochieng from the Entrepreneurship Educators Foundation**, comments: “When entrepreneurs come in at incubation, they are an individual or a partnership of two people. Now, when they scale up their business they will have created job opportunities for twenty or thirty people. That success can be replicated in different environments, and that means a lot of impact in entrepreneurial development, both locally and globally.”

Kira Analytics is a Kenyan business being supported by the IAU’s Youth Entrepreneurship Accelerator Programme. **Anthony Migwi, business owner at Kira Analytics, said:** “Having the support of the British Council dramatically increases our chances of moving from year one to year three to year five.”

The project is part of The British Council’s Innovation for African Universities (IAU) programme, which includes partner universities and enterprise and innovation organisations in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and the UK. The programme comprises 24 project partnerships and aims to grow universities’ capabilities for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, developing the skills graduates require to build sustainable industries, companies and services.

**Monica Blagescu, spokesperson at The British Council, commented**: “Through stronger peer to peer connections and sharing best practices and knowledge between higher education institutions, the programme aims to enhance students’ employability and support economic development across Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa now and into the future.”

To find out more about the British Council IAU programme visit: [www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/opportunities/innovation-african-universities](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/opportunities/innovation-african-universities)

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