AFRICA'S VISIONARY TECHNOLOGY BASE

KENYA'S SILICON SAVANNAH



Even though it seems like a city name, it is not. Silicon Valley is a term used to indicate a place-based in the United States/San Francisco Bay area where technological giant's headquarters exist, such as Apple, Alphabet Inc.'s Google, Cisco Systems and Hewlett-Packard (HP).

It was named after the main material (Silicon) used in manufacturing microprocessors. Silicon Valley is home to dozens of major technology, software, and internet companies.

According to the analysis of The Guardian[1]; Silicon Valley GDP per capita was estimated at $128,308 in 2019, this number out-produce other countries' GDPs such as Finland based on the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis.

But this valley started to have African taste in Kenya, supported by a more stable political climate, and continuous focus on raising attractiveness for technology and innovation investment, boosted by the rapid increment of internet penetration with being the fifth in Africa in receiving a foreign direct investment[2] of 2 billion in 2018. Kenya's ICT (Information Communication and

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/apr/30/silicon-valley-wealth-second-richest-country-world-earth

[2] EY Attractiveness Program Africa September 2019

Technology) market was valued at $717 million at the end of 2019 with computer hardware accounting for nearly 60% of the total ICT investments.

SİLİCON SAVANNAH

Three pillars were behind the emergence and evolution of Silicon Savannah in Kenya:



1- Money-transferring app (M-PESA) that converted even the most basic cell phones into roaming bank accounts and money-transfer devices.

2- (Ushahidi) the app, which translates to "testimony" in Swahili that was used to map reports of violence in Kenya after the post-election violence in 2008 and was recognized as one of Africa's first globally recognized apps.

3- TEAMs undersea fiber optic cable that arrived in Mombasa in 2010, and significantly increased broadband in East Africa.

The Kenyan government has acknowledged the vast opportunities that digital technology can bring, therefore new reforms were taken to attract foreign investment and move step by step closer to Kenya Vision 2030 of a globally competitive knowledge-based economy[3]. **Policy Reforms was concluded such as the** review of National ICT Policy and re-align with the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the best international practice; and **Legal Reforms such as** Review of Media Act 2007 and Kenya Information and Communication Act (KICA), and finally **Institutional Reform through** Establishment of a National ICT Agency.

Konza City, also known as "Silicon Savannah", is one of the main axes of the "Vision 2030" project introduced in 2008, which is to serve as a roadmap for the future economic and social development of the country. This 400 million of cost and 5000 acres site is set to be built over the next 20 years to house a true ecosystem of startups, investors, and researchers. The goal is to make

[3] http://vision2030.go.ke/project/ict-policy-legal-and-institutional-reforms/

Silicon Savannah the African counterpart of Silicon Valley, with the goal of creating 20,000 jobs in five years and ten times more from 2030 on.[4]

SILICON SAVVANAH OR THE SILICON VALLEY

Can Silicon Savvanah be Silicon valley? argumented by the uncertainty and foggy predictability of the political and economic environment in Africa. Also, technology in Africa is still solution-based where many tech giants focus on capitalizing on consumerism, while African technology purposes should aim to solve the broken value chains and broken government services, adding the inequalities between Africa's areas with high-low technology infrastructure.

With[5] about 75% of Kenya's population work at least part-time in the agricultural sector, including livestock and pastoral activities where the urban population estimated at 27% of the total population, bringing such utopian schemes to life is no easy task for African governments that are struggling to provide adequate roads, power, water, and security to their existing cities and decrease the development gap between urban and rural areas that some are 100 years apart.

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[4] https://www.konza.go.ke/
[5] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/attachments/summaries/KE-summary.pdf