

Co-creating Geospatial Solutions in Africa: A Nordic–African Partnership

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SUMMARY

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Africa's growth is accelerating faster than traditional systems can manage. Cities expand before they are fully mapped, and digital innovations often outpace policy and planning. The challenge lies not in talent but in the absence of structures that connect innovation, governance, and investment.

This gap presents opportunities for collaboration. Africa's digitally driven population and growing start-up ecosystem offer fertile ground for innovation. As people move, build, and create, they generate a valuable resource: location data. When used effectively, it can guide land-use planning, improve public services, and support sustainable development, such as mapping informal settlements for infrastructure planning or applying satellite imagery and open data to strengthen climate resilience in agriculture and urban areas. Initiatives such as the Tanzania Resilience Academy show how data-driven training and local partnerships can build the skills needed to sustain this progress. For Nordic companies, this presents an opportunity to collaborate and jointly develop data-driven solutions and sustainable business models that benefit both regions.

The Location Innovation Hub in Finland, one of Europe's Digital Innovation Hubs, collaborated with the University of Turku to create the Unlocking Growth in Africa webinar series. The sessions brought together African and Nordic innovators and global partners to explore how geospatial and digital tools can advance inclusive and sustainable growth. Discussions focused on urban resilience, data ecosystems, youth-led innovations, and funding mechanisms.

The conversations showed that Africa's innovation environment is active and rapidly evolving. Entrepreneurs are using drones to map informal settlements, local communities to validate satellite

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data, and digital platforms to improve logistics and health services. Strengthening collaboration between local and global expertise is essential for the next phase of growth. Some Nordic companies have already begun this journey, learning that success depends on shared goals, mutual respect, and adapting solutions to local contexts.

Building on these experiences, and a shared vision for sustainable growth, we developed Nordic Business Expansion to Africa, a practical guide for companies seeking to engage responsibly in African markets. It provides tools for navigating cultural and legal frameworks and adapting technology to local needs, highlighting opportunities in smart urban solutions such as IoT-based utilities and early-warning systems for climate resilience.

Looking ahead, we aim to deepen cooperation between Nordic and African actors by linking talent, markets, and innovation ecosystems. By harnessing geospatial data to its full potential, we can co-develop solutions that drive shared and sustainable growth for both regions.

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