

Multipliers for Employment Creation: The IT sector in Kenya

Kickoff Meeting & Workshop

Strathmore University, Nairobi, 1 – 2 December 2014

Consortium partners in the project held their kickoff meeting on 1 December in the form of a research workshop. The partners also visited the iHub in central Nairobi as one of the research sites for fieldwork.

1. Research Workshop

The aim of the workshop was to build a shared understanding of the project's overall aims, theory and proposed methodology. The workshop also provided an opportunity for each partner to discuss their expectations for project outcomes and to decide on project deliverables.

After preliminary introductions, Prof. Harry Barkema (LSE / RSM) presented the overall goals of the project and the context in which the project is embedded. The project forms part of a broader research program on IT enterprises in developing countries and similar studies were conducted in South Africa and Bangladesh. He concluded the session by answering questions from the audience.

Thereafter 3 participants presented different aspects of the project's multi-method approach. First, Christian Busch (London School of Economics) presented findings of his case study in South Africa and explained how a similar approach could be used to assess success and failure of IT enterprises in Kenya. Next, Lameez Alexander (Rotterdam School of Management) presented a proposed project on the learning experiences of entrepreneurs using ethnographic methodology. The aim of the study is to determine how learning experiences facilitate the development of entrepreneurial proactivity. Third, Prof. Robert Mudida (Strathmore University) presented findings of a large-scale innovation survey he recently conducted in Kenya. He explained that, based on the findings from the qualitative phase, a similar survey methodology would be used for the quantitative phase of the project. After each presentation ample time was dedicated to questions and discussion.

In the afternoon, Angela Okune and Adam Chagani, research managers at the iHub, presented some of the findings of studies that the iHub has conducted. The participants discussed the iHub's involvement in the project as research partners, as well as project coordination and next steps in the process.

2. Visit to iHub

The partners visited the iHub in central Nairobi on 2nd December. The purpose of the visit was to meet other members of iHub management and for introduction to the organization as our primary site for ethnographic fieldwork. The partners met with Hilde Moraa, a research fellow at iHub, who talked about her research on ICT hubs in rural Kenya and her experience as the co-founder of a tech startup. We discussed the aims of our project and how it could contribute to ongoing research at iHub. Thereafter, the iHub community manager, Mugethi Gitau, showed us around the iHub and the space where community members of (aspiring) entrepreneurs gathered to develop their ideas and network with their peers.