

Drone Technology, the New Frontier in Socioeconomic Empowerment



Yankho Likaku of Research Institute for Innovation and Sustainability (RIIS) presenting on strengthening drone ecosystems in South Africa and Kenya. The event was organised by the RISA Fund in Nairobi, Kenya.

Burooj Enterprises, RISA Funded Project Milestones

- The study funded by the RISA Grant recommended establishing a drone corridor within a special economic zone (SEZ) to boost innovation and partnership.
- The team proposed collaborations with key stakeholders bringing together ecosystem actors for networking.
- Created awareness of drone application to increase demand and spur partnerships.



About the RISA Fund

The Research and Innovation Systems for Africa (RISA) Fund is a programme to support and strengthen research and innovation systems in six countries: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Ethiopia. The programme runs from 2021 to 2024 and is funded by UKAid.

About Burooj Enterprises, RISA Funded Project

Burooj Enterprises Pty received a grant from the RISA Fund to conduct a study to map and articulate opportunities and challenges related to the drone value chain in Kenya and South Africa. The company specialises in delivering engineering management solutions, ranging from aerospace, mining and construction, and pharmacy.

The aim of the study was to identify ecosystem drivers preventing small business growth, job creation, and proposed practical solutions with the ability to accelerate development and increase the use of drones to stimulate socioeconomic development in the two countries.

The study involved synthesis and evaluation of the ecosystem through desktop research and stakeholder insights to understand barriers affecting growth, solutions, and the overall state of the drone ecosystem. Key ecosystem actors in the drone industry were mapped in the study including customers, small businesses, industry bodies, civil aviation authorities, technical experts, and other players.

"The RISA Fund partnered with Burooj Enterprises to deliver this piece of work. The aim of the study was to understand the opportunities available, to strengthen the drone ecosystem for Kenya and South Africa, and to acknowledge obtainable avenues for job creation," says Thambo Scott, a consultant at Burooj Enterprises.

The team assessed sectors that could highly benefit from drones, interacted with potential customers, drone specialists, and engaged with regulatory specialists to understand the hurdles in obtaining licenses and other requirements for drone users.

They evaluated the readiness of the drone technology in the two countries, training and licensing requirements, barriers preventing uptake, and the available opportunities to expand the use of drones and related data services to support small business growth.

Study Findings

The study revealed that in South Africa, there is no cohesive master plan that aligns all ecosystem actors, thus reducing the possibility of collaboration. In Kenya, there is no formal industry body that coordinates and represents the drone industry. This has led to actors operating in an informal environment and a lack of activities to spur innovation and foster stronger synergies.

To accelerate the findings, the team collaborated with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the South African National Space Agency, and the Southern Bay Innovation Campus to understand the prospect of establishing drone corridors in the Western Cape Province in South Africa. The United Nations agency has established drone corridors in Malawi and this proved to be a fantastic source of information to the researchers.

"It is amazing, UNICEF has established corridors locally. They have corridors running in Malawi and they require partners to share the knowledge. This kind of collaboration will support the growth of drone technology in South Africa," says Hussein Carrim, technical director, Burooj Enterprises.

The drone industry is nascent in Kenya, hence there is need to establish institutions that will bring together the drone ecosystem in the country.

"We have initiated conversations with the Kenya National Innovation Agency, and they are interested in taking the discussion forward to see the growth of the drone industry in Kenya," observes Hussein.

The researchers indicate that some logistic companies have acknowledged the possibility of using drones as a mechanism of delivering products in future. ShopRite Checkers in South African is one such company.



"There is room and scope for that to happen, though there are some regulatory constraints that need to be addressed, but they have agreed to take that route," says Thambo Scott.

Study Recommendations

According to Burooj, most end users are excited about using drones and consequently, all stakeholders should come together to unlock the hurdles in the drone ecosystem.

The study recommends that the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) and other industry bodies increase awareness of drone application to increase demand and spur partnerships. In Kenya, there is need to form an industry body that reports to the Kenyan Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) to bring together all ecosystem players at various levels of the value chain.

For both ecosystems, there is an opportunity for regional networking to boost knowledge sharing and learning. For instance, South Africa can learn from the collaboration and partnership model between local and international players evident in Kenya for the exploration of new sectors.

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