



MARAMOJA Transport

Scaling Case Study

Navigating Growth & Transformation in the African Transport Sector

This case study explores the scaling journey of MARAMOJA, a Kenyan transport and logistics firm, with a focus on the key organisational strategies driving its growth. It highlights the company's adaptive approach to navigating challenges in the African transport sector, offering insights into the operational and leadership factors that have helped fuel its expansion.



This is the first scaling case study report in a series produced by [GrowthAfrica](#) and [Systemic Innovation](#) under a FCDO-funded Research and Innovation Systems for Africa ([RISA](#)) Fund project to formalise and implement data strategies to support growth impact ventures and innovation ecosystem enablers in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Rwanda. This report is informed by the ScaleUp Scan, a diagnostics tool provided by our partners, [ScaleUp Nation](#), a global scaling authority, which is on a mission to significantly increase the number of impact-oriented scale-ups, driving a meaningful change in the world.

Company Overview



MARAMOJA
T R A N S P O R T

Founders

- Ronald Mahondo (CEO)
- Jason Eisen (Founder & Chairman)
- Bastian Blankenburg (CTO & Co-Founder)
- Polina Kazak (Former Co-Founder & Product Manager I Design)

Headquarters: Nairobi, Kenya

Operations: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana, Zanzibar

Primary Industry: Transport and Logistics

Ownership: Privately Held

Number of Employees (as of 2024): 24 full-time | 15 part-time

Financing Status: Venture Capital-Backed, raised \$500,000 (SAFE note) [5 investors](#)

Website: <https://maramoja.co.ke/>



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Methodology

This case study draws on a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, including internal company records, financial reports, and strategic documents. Insights from the [Scaleup Scan](#) report, a tool provided by Scaleup Nation, offered a comprehensive diagnostic of MARAMOJA's scale-readiness. Additionally, the study

integrates secondary research on market trends and an in-depth interview with [Ronald Mahondo](#), CEO of MARAMOJA. Mahondo's 16 years of experience in the sector, including leadership roles at Easy Taxi and Little Cabs, provides invaluable insights into MARAMOJA's operational dynamics and leadership strategies.

Scaling Analysis

Snapshot Summary

Founded in 2013, MARAMOJA initially began as a ride-hailing service in Nairobi. Over time, its offerings have evolved to include school transport and other SaaS products in the transport and logistics space. While the company's current operations are focused on ride-hailing and school transport, it is preparing to launch MARAMOJA 3.0, a Mobility Marketplace that will further expand its offerings to include logistics, attractions, and rentals, driving its growth across Africa.

The firm's app enables its customers to connect with curated drivers they know, like, or trust, either directly or through their network, while also allowing drivers to curate their customers through their customer base. MARAMOJA is currently focused on ride-hailing and school transport services, and is preparing to launch MARAMOJA 3.0, a Mobility Marketplace that will expand its offerings to include a wider range of transport and logistics solutions, such as taxi services, school

transport, rentals and logistics, catering to both B2B and B2C markets.



Vision

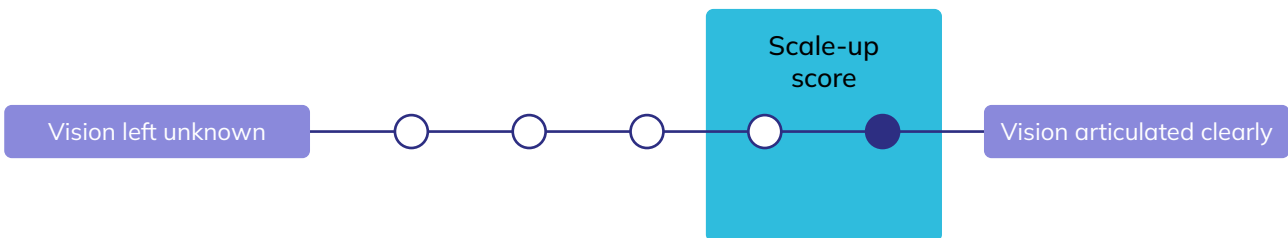
MARAMOJA envisions a future where safe, efficient, and accessible transportation is seamlessly integrated into the fabric of everyday life, positively impacting communities, enhancing sustainability, and fostering social and economic development across regions. Our long-term goal is to revolutionise mobility, making it a cornerstone of progress and well-being.

MARAMOJA's Compelling Vision

Scale-ups articulate their future clearly instead of leaving it relatively unknown. MARAMOJA was founded with a simple yet powerful mission: to connect people with trusted drivers through a community-driven model, fostering trust and personalised service. This unique, localised approach quickly differentiated it from competitors like Uber and Bolt which often rely on standardised models and impersonal interactions.

As the company grew, so did its vision. Today, MARAMOJA's mission goes beyond ride-hailing and school transport, aiming to empower local entrepreneurs across the transport and logistics sector, particularly in underserved markets. CEO Ronald Mahondo articulated this vision clearly: "Our goal has always been to create a thousand millionaires, not just one billionaire. We want to empower communities while transforming transportation in Africa."

Having a clear and well-defined vision is your guiding compass that keeps you from losing direction. It is a critical tool, especially when you need to pivot. Scale-ups are more ambitious than stall-ups in terms of the desired future size of the business and the amount of impact they aim to achieve.



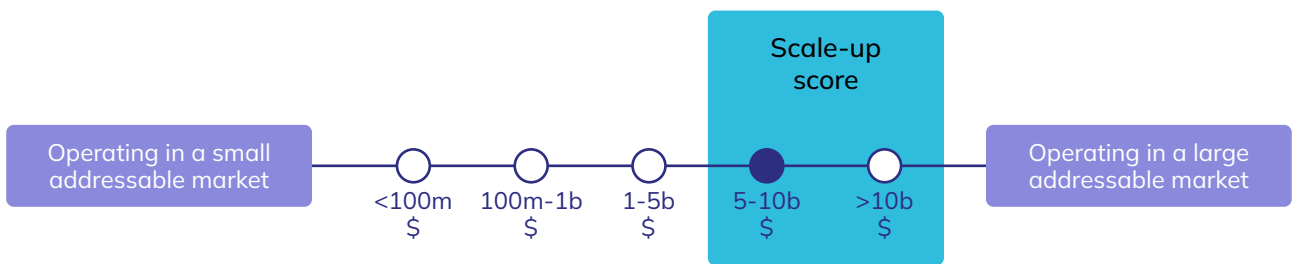
Source: ScaleUp Nation (2024)

Market and Industry

The African transport sector is growing rapidly, with increased urbanisation and a rising middle class driving demand for mobility solutions.

MARAMOJA operates in this large and rapidly growing African mobility market, which presents significant growth opportunities. Unlike markets dominated by a few players, Maramoja has thrived by focusing on regions where competition is less intense but where demand for transportation and logistics services is rapidly increasing.

This is the case for MARAMOJA, as indicated in the graph below.



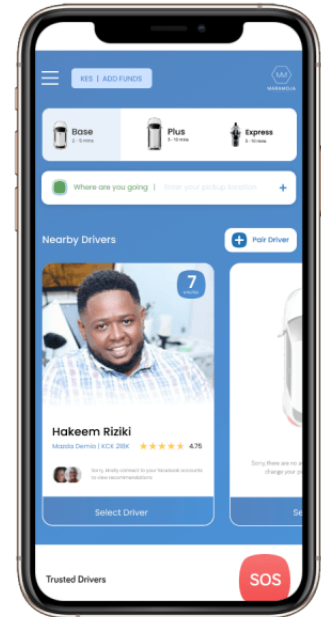
Source: ScaleUp Nation (2024)

Investment in Technology

Scale-ups have a product/service based on proprietary or hard-to-replicate technology, privileged partnerships or relationships, whose value can be monetised sustainably.

MARAMOJA's growth is enabled by its innovative technology, which leverages cutting-edge technologies like AI and data analytics. Central to its success is the AI-based trust engine developed by its sister company, UTU, which fosters trust between

drivers and passengers by analysing social connections offering a more personalised and secure experience than traditional star-rating systems. This unique approach sets MARAMOJA apart from competitors and enhances the overall customer experience. Furthermore, MARAMOJA's commitment to data-driven decision-making enables the company to predict market trends, optimise routes, and allocate resources efficiently, ensuring it remains competitive and agile.



Scalable Model

A scalable business model allows a company's net profit margin to grow as sales volume increases, particularly when fixed costs are involved—such as with IT platforms, factories, licences, or databases. These “economies of scale” are especially common in digital, software and/or online businesses. One of MARAMOJA’s key strengths is its scalable business model, which has evolved to address the dynamic African mobility market. Initially launched as a ride-hailing service, the company expanded into the school transport sector, demonstrating its adaptability and focus on providing tailored solutions. This expansion, coupled with its upcoming launch of the MARAMOJA 3.0 Mobility Marketplace, positions the

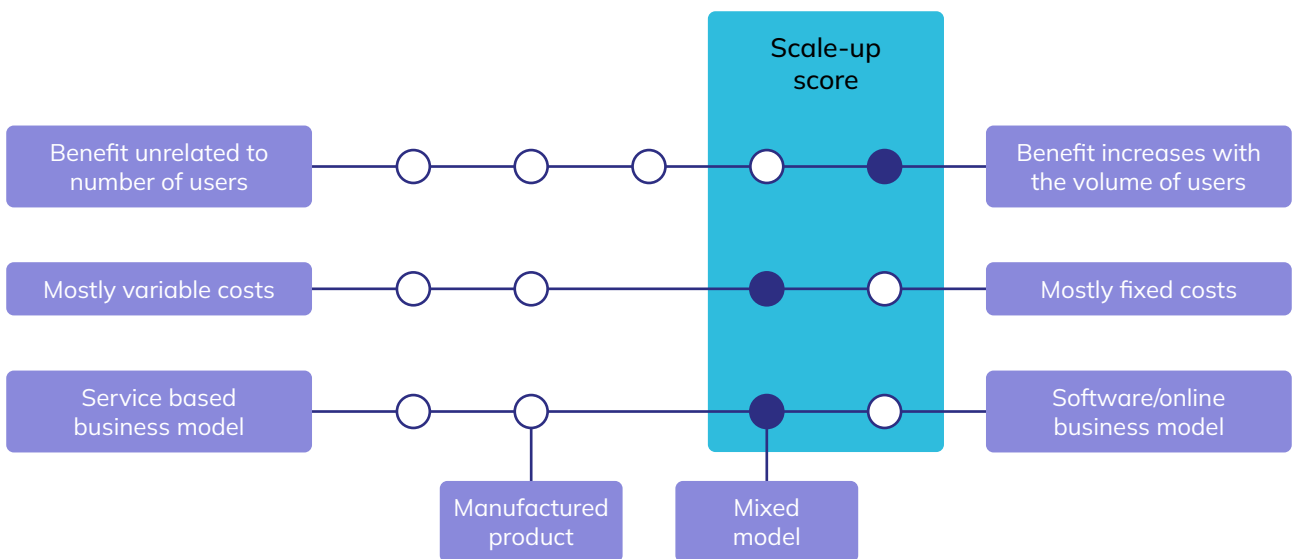
company for further growth and diversification, catering to both B2B and B2C customers across a wider range of transport and logistics needs.

MARAMOJA’s decentralised model has been crucial to its scalability. CEO Ronald Mahondo explained, “We believe decentralisation allows us to penetrate markets more effectively than a centralised growth model.” By partnering with local entrepreneurs, Maramoja creates infrastructure that supports small businesses, enabling it to scale rapidly without heavy direct investment. This model also allows the company to tailor its services

to the specific needs of different regions, further enhancing its scalability. As Mahondo notes, “Our growth is almost like an infrastructure play, where we partner with local entrepreneurs to build their businesses on top of our platform.”

Note that super-linear scalable models benefit from increasing returns:

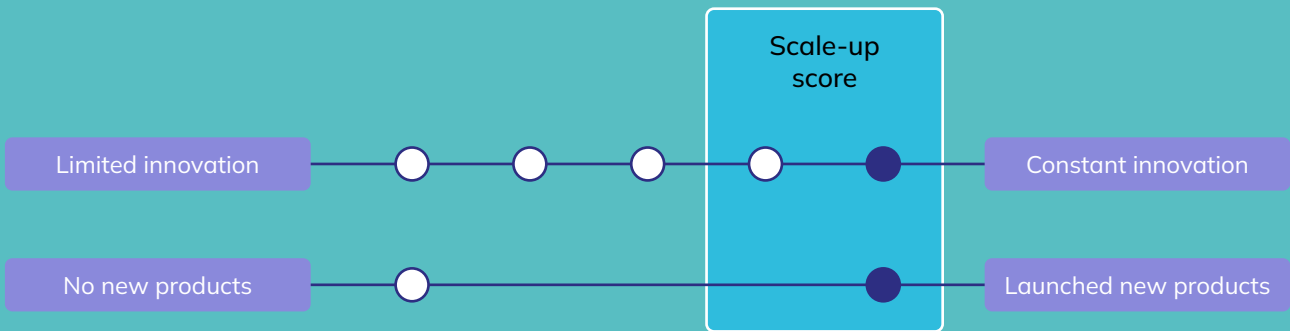
- 1) when the product becomes more valuable as more customers use it
- 2) when the product becomes more useful as customers use it for a longer period of time, and
- 3) when customers start pushing it to other customers (so called “viral marketing”).



Source: ScaleUp Nation (2024)

Continuous Innovation

Scale-ups continuously innovate and launch new products, unlike “stall-ups” that make only incremental improvements to their initial offerings. A focus on product development has enabled MARAMOJA to diversify its revenue streams and quickly adapt to changing market conditions. As Mahondo noted, “We’ve been operating in startup mode for a long time, and our products have evolved through testing various approaches to see what works.”



Source: ScaleUp Nation (2024)

The company recently launched MARAMOJA 3.0, a Mobility Marketplace that will provide a variety of trusted transport services tailored to African businesses and consumers. This platform will offer a range of solutions for B2B and B2C transport, such as taxi services, school transport, and logistics, enabling businesses and individuals to access customised transport solutions. This move is expected to provide MARAMOJA with a competitive advantage in the evolving African mobility market.

MARAMOJA’s decentralised growth model leverages partnerships with local entrepreneurs across Africa.

By providing these entrepreneurs with the tools, technology, and brand recognition to build their own transport and logistics businesses, MARAMOJA fosters economic empowerment and expands its reach efficiently. These partnerships offer valuable market insights and local connections, enabling MARAMOJA to tailor its services to the specific needs of different regions. This collaborative approach positions MARAMOJA for growth in markets with high demand for reliable and accessible transport solutions, while also contributing to the development of local economies.

Despite its successes, MARAMOJA’s journey has not been without challenges. The company faced hurdles in scaling its B2C ride-hailing services and adapting to the evolving landscape of the transport sector. These challenges prompted adjustments, including a greater focus on B2B partnerships and the development of innovative solutions like the upcoming MARAMOJA 3.0 platform. This shift has enabled MARAMOJA to build a more sustainable and scalable business model, positioning it for continued growth in the African mobility market.

Riding Waves

Scale-ups thrive by riding waves—identifying and capitalising on unexpected opportunities as they arise.

They optimise timing to align with favourable trends and events, much like a surfer awaiting the perfect wave. Preparedness allows them to recognise opportunities and act swiftly to seize maximum advantage.

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, MARAMOJA faced significant challenges, as lockdowns and reduced mobility disrupted the transport sector. The company responded by pivoting to focus on after-work corporate transport, which included higher-capacity vehicles for organisations that needed transport services during the lockdowns. This shift initially boosted revenue by meeting a critical need during uncertain times. Furthermore, this pivot catalysed the birth of MARAMOJA for Schools, showcasing the company's agility in adapting to the changing landscape and identifying new opportunities amidst adversity.

CEO Ronald Mahondo shared insights into their response, saying, "In 2019, COVID hit us hard, and mobility came to a standstill. We needed to rethink our survival strategy and developed the 'After Work' programme, ensuring employee safety during transit. Soon after, we received inquiries from corporates about offering similar services for school transport. And that was the birth of MARAMOJA for Schools."

The pandemic also accelerated MARAMOJA's digital transformation, which included further development of its technology platform and the conceptualisation of MARAMOJA 3.0. This adaptability showcases MARAMOJA's agility, enabling the company to emerge stronger post-pandemic. Reflecting on the overall impact, Mahondo noted, "Even through COVID, we managed to replace lost revenue and actually grow during that period."

Workforce Dynamics

The entrepreneurial background of MARAMOJA's management is complemented by an experienced and proactive board of directors. The board's strategic guidance has played a pivotal role in ensuring MARAMOJA's steady operational growth while fostering innovation—a critical balance for both business leadership and people management.

The management team at MARAMOJA exemplifies ambidexterity leadership - a term first [defined in 2011](#) as “the leaders' ability to foster both explorative and exploitative behaviours in their organisation. Over the past few years, MARAMOJA has made significant adjustments to its workforce structure as a direct response to market demands and operational needs. The company has shifted towards a more flexible workforce model, increasingly relying on contractors and consultants to enhance agility while reducing fixed costs.

CEO Ronald Mahondo emphasised that the company's adaptations were crucial to keep pace with a rapidly evolving market and align with its scaling objectives. He explained, “As we grew, our staff composition no longer matched the needs of our expanding business. Many roles were designed for an earlier stage, where human interaction played a significant role in customer relationships. As we scale, we are leveraging technology to streamline operations and enhance efficiency. This includes shifting towards more automated self-service solutions and optimising our technology platform to support our growth trajectory. A scale-up needs to be able to deliver at volume, reliably and efficiently, and technology is key to achieving this.

MARAMOJA's shift towards a more flexible workforce model, with increased reliance on contractors and consultants, has yielded significant benefits, including enhanced financial flexibility and efficient resource allocation. This approach allows the company to scale specific operations on demand, while focusing its internal team on core competencies. To address potential challenges related to service quality and knowledge retention, MARAMOJA is actively investing in technology solutions and building a strong network of empowered local entrepreneurs who are committed to upholding the company's high standards and contributing to its long-term success.



Learning Culture

MARAMOJA's agility and adaptability have been key factors in its growth, enabling the company to navigate market shifts and capitalise on emerging opportunities. This flexibility, coupled with a focus on innovation and technology, has allowed MARAMOJA to respond effectively to challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and maintain a competitive edge in the evolving African mobility market. The company's commitment to continuous improvement and its ability to learn from experience position it well for future growth and expansion.

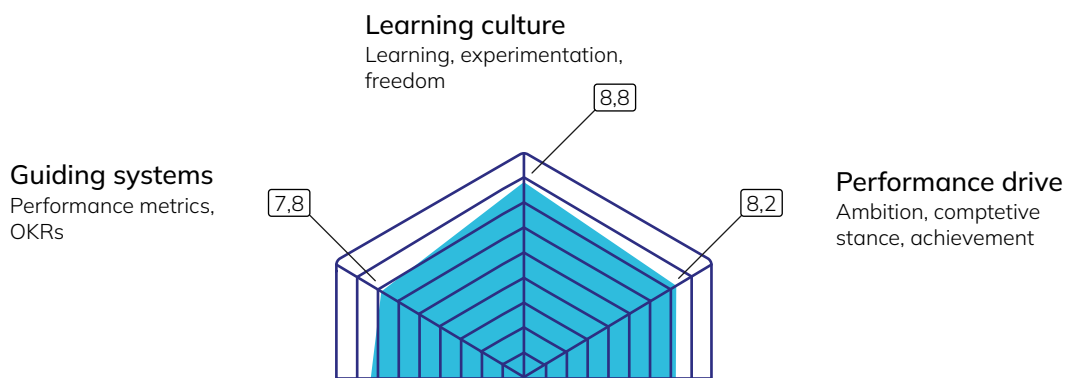
For scale-ups, informal structures like culture are highly important.

The cultural success factors that are most common among scale-ups include:

- A learning culture, where continuous innovation, experimentation and entrepreneurial freedom thrive, and at the same time a performance drive
- An attractive workplace with trust-based relationships within the team, diversity of backgrounds and ways of thinking

- A business beat, with clear roles, responsibilities and well-defined processes, focus and rhythm, combined with guiding metrics

MARAMOJA is committed to empowering local entrepreneurs by providing them with the tools, technology, and capacity-building resources necessary to thrive in the transport and logistics sector. Founder Jason Eisen stresses the importance of this investment in human capital, stating, "Having a strong, dedicated workforce can be the difference between success and failure".



Source: ScaleUp Nation (2024)

Competitive Edge

Scale-ups develop a unique advantage that sets them apart from competition. It can be a privileged relationship, or a specific and unique capability.

Unlike Uber and Bolt, who often invest heavily in marketing to capture market share, MARAMOJA has adopted a lean and efficient marketing model, leveraging its deep understanding of local markets and its community-driven approach to build trust and brand recognition organically. As Founder Jason Eisen highlights, “Uber has spent millions of dollars on marketing in Nairobi. We have only

spent an average of US\$30,000 on marketing, but still made strides in the market. We have been able to beat the big guys on a per-dollar spending basis”.

MARAMOJA’s community-centric pricing model which prioritises equitable treatment for both drivers and passengers, fosters a positive and sustainable ecosystem. This approach not only enhances the overall user experience but also contributes to MARAMOJA’s competitive advantage by attracting and retaining drivers and riders who value fairness and transparency.



Customer Delight

Scale-ups do not simply satisfy their customers but truly delight them – this unleashes demand for their product. Customer delight requires deep customer understanding, putting the interests of your customers before anything, being passionate to serve them, and being creative in your product design. Delight not only comes from the product but also from the experience in using the product and from the interaction with your company.

As CEO Ronald Mahondo explains, “Finding taxis in Kenya is not a problem, but finding taxis you can trust is the biggest problem. MARAMOJA is giving its clients the opportunity to pick drivers they want and trust”. This trust-based model distinguishes MARAMOJA from global competitors like Uber and Bolt, who rely primarily on star-rating systems. By leveraging deep community connections and fostering personal relationships between drivers and passengers, MARAMOJA has been able to offer a more personalised and localised solution to transportation challenges in Kenya and other markets, enhancing both safety and user experience.

At the core of MARAMOJA's value proposition is its ability to meet essential transportation needs through community-based solutions, fostering trust and personalisation. By leveraging its AI-powered trust engine and empowering local entrepreneurs, MARAMOJA aims to provide a superior service that exceeds customer expectations and builds long-term loyalty. This focus on delivering a 'must-have' experience positions the company for sustainable growth and establishes it as a trusted brand in the African mobility market.

Revenue Strategy

Successful scale-ups maintain positive working capital, attract venture capital, and avoid dependence on non-return seeking capital, such as subsidies or grants.

Under the leadership of Ronald Mahondo, who became CEO in 2018, MARAMOJA embarked on several initiatives that reshaped its revenue trajectory. One of the most impactful decisions was the shift towards a B2B model, which allowed the company to tap into more stable and lucrative business markets. This transition played a pivotal role in driving significant revenue growth, especially in 2022.

MARAMOJA's financial journey from 2021 to 2023 demonstrates both growth and adaptability. In 2021, the company generated KES 64 million, bolstered by the launch of MARAMOJA for Schools, which marked its entry into the school transportation sector. This new revenue stream diversified the company's portfolio and positioned MARAMOJA as a key player in an underserved niche. By 2022, the company's revenue surged to KES 101 million, reflecting the success of its B2B shift and its ability to capitalise on market opportunities in education and logistics.

MARAMOJA's financial journey from 2021 to 2023 showcases consistent growth and decision-making. In 2021, the company generated KES 64 million. By 2022, revenue surged to KES 101 million, reflecting the success of its initiatives and market expansion. In 2023, MARAMOJA made a decision to temporarily pause user acquisition efforts to focus on enhancing its technological capabilities and operational infrastructure, laying the groundwork for sustained, long-term growth. This proactive approach, coupled with its flexible financial strategy and investments in technology and market positioning, demonstrates the company's commitment to building a strong foundation for future success and sustainable expansion in the African mobility market.

Fundraising

Scale-ups typically raise about twice the funding of their stalled counterparts, not merely due to fundraising proficiency, but because they have key success factors in place that lead to positive investment decisions during due diligence. This creates a virtuous cycle, where the most promising ventures receive more capital, fueling further growth.

MARAMOJA has raised approximately \$500,000 in funding, primarily through its sister company, UTU. A significant portion of this capital was invested in technology development, notably the AI-based trust engine and the MARAMOJA 3.0 platform—both crucial components for the company's long-term growth and competitive edge. Additionally, these funds supported MARAMOJA's market expansion efforts and provided much-needed working capital during periods of transition. The company is currently raising an additional \$1.8M at a pre-money valuation of \$8M, further demonstrating its ability to attract investment and highlighting its financial viability and capacity to scale.

Since 2021, MARAMOJA has diversified its funding sources, increasingly relying on debt instruments, alongside equity financing. This shift toward more balanced capital structure reflects the company's focus on managing working capital needs and ensuring financial flexibility for future growth. CEO Ronald Mahondo explained the company's financial strategy: "We've grown through a mixture of different debt instruments and structural adjustments within the organisation, which ultimately combine debt and equity funding. Initially, much of our capital came from legacy investors, but one of our key growth challenges was working capital. To address this, we partnered with fintech companies like Jia and Simplify, who now manage our working capital needs, helping us bridge that gap." This approach to financial management, coupled with the current Pre-A fundraising round targeting \$1.8M at a pre-money valuation of \$8M, positions MARAMOJA for continued expansion and success in the African mobility market.

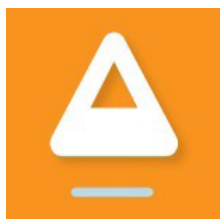
This flexible financial approach underscores MARAMOJA's adaptability in managing its financial requirements while pursuing growth opportunities. By continuously aligning its financial and revenue strategies with market conditions and operational capabilities, MARAMOJA is well-positioned to navigate challenges and capitalise on future opportunities.

Collaborative Growth Partnerships

MARAMOJA has leveraged partnerships to enhance its operations and accelerate growth. Collaborations with fintech and insurtech companies, such as Jia, Untapped Capital and Simplify, have played a pivotal role in managing the company’s working capital needs. These partnerships demonstrate a forward-thinking approach to financial management, providing MARAMOJA with advanced financial tools and improved flexibility. Additionally, its partnership with UTU has given the company access to an AI-based trust engine, significantly enhancing both user experience and security on the platform.

MARAMOJA’s decentralised growth model is further strengthened by its partnerships approach with local entrepreneurs across Africa. By empowering these entrepreneurs with the necessary tools and resources to build their businesses on MARAMOJA’s platform, the company seeks to expand its reach efficiently without heavy direct investments. These partnerships would provide valuable market insights and local connections, enabling MARAMOJA to tailor its services to the specific needs of different regions while maintaining consistent brand standards. This collaborative approach fosters rapid and sustainable growth while also contributing to the development of local economies.

Operating across diverse regions in Africa, MARAMOJA navigates a complex and fragmented regulatory environment. Regulations related to the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) in Kenya and local government requirements have presented challenges to the company’s operational flexibility. However, MARAMOJA is proactively addressing these challenges through strategic partnerships and a focus on compliance. One such partnership, a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with the E-Government of Zanzibar (EGAZ), is currently under development and has the potential to open new markets and position MARAMOJA as a trusted partner in public sector transportation solutions. This collaboration is expected to pave the way for expansion into a \$250M market in Zanzibar, where the company aims for a 40% market share by 2026. These initiatives demonstrate MARAMOJA’s commitment to navigating complex regulatory landscapes and leveraging collaborations for significant growth opportunities.



Working closely with governmental entities not only enables MARAMOJA to influence transportation policies that support innovation and expansion but also facilitates the sharing of resources and expertise. As highlighted by ScaleUp Nation (2021), “Trailblazers are impact scale-ups that aim to transform industries and show that new ways of doing business are possible. They pave the way for others to follow, reshaping policy and market conditions, while appealing to a new and emerging consumer base”.¹

Maramoja’s strategic partnerships with governments, such as the ongoing collaboration with the E-Government of Zanzibar, not only enable the company to navigate complex regulatory environments but also position it as a key player in shaping the future of transportation across Africa. By fostering these collaborative and driving innovation in the sector, MARAMOJA is solidifying its role as a leading transport and logistics platform in the continent.



¹ Circular Trailblazers: Scale-Ups Leading the Way Towards a More Circular Economy. Scaleup Nation and World Economic Forum (2021). https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Circular_Trailblazers_report_2020.pdf

Future Plans and Priorities

MARAMOJA's future growth strategy centres on expanding its presence in the rapidly growing African transport and logistics sector. Building on its successful B2B model, the company plans to introduce new logistics solutions specifically designed for corporate clients, further deepening its penetration in this lucrative market segment. The upcoming launch of the MARAMOJA 3.0 Mobility Marketplace will play a crucial role in this expansion, providing a platform for businesses and individuals to access a wider range of transport and logistics services. This focus, coupled with the company's commitment to empowering local entrepreneurs, positions MARAMOJA for significant growth and market leadership across the continent.

At the core of this expansion is the development of the MARAMOJA 3.0 digital platform, a Mobility Marketplace that will play a crucial role in the company's growth by providing a wider range of transport and logistics services to both B2B and B2C customers. The platform will empower

entrepreneurs to leverage MARAMOJA's cutting-edge technology and established brand to build and scale their own businesses, contributing to MARAMOJA's expansion across Africa.

Looking ahead, MARAMOJA envisions playing a transformative role in the African mobility market by fostering community-driven networks and empowering local entrepreneurs. The company is committed to prioritising partnerships and technologies that promote sustainability and inclusivity, setting it apart from global competitors. With the upcoming launch of the MARAMOJA 3.0 Mobility Marketplace, the company aims to address the unique challenges and opportunities within African markets by providing a wide range of flexible, locally-driven transport and logistics solutions. MARAMOJA's vision includes expanding its presence across key markets in Africa and achieving a 40% market share in Zanzibar by 2026, demonstrating its ambition and potential for significant growth and impact.

CEO Ronald Mahondo captures this vision: "We are transforming MARAMOJA into a platform where businesses in transport and logistics can build and market their own brands. Unlike global platforms, where you're tied to their branding, our model allows entrepreneurs to control their own pricing, policies, and operations." This decentralised approach empowers local entrepreneurs to operate with greater autonomy while benefiting from MARAMOJA's infrastructure, technological capabilities, and established brand recognition. As more entrepreneurs join the platform, this creates a network effect, further enhancing the value proposition for all stakeholders and driving sustainable growth for MARAMOJA.

MARAMOJA's future is guided by a clear vision—not just to grow its market presence, but to do so in a way that fosters local entrepreneurship, drives sustainable development, and delivers strong financial performance. With a focus on innovation and strategic partnerships, MARAMOJA intends to lead the transformation of the African transport and logistics sector. The company aims to achieve a \$50M valuation by 2026.



GrowthAfrica and Systemic Innovation are working to formalise and implement data strategies to support growth impact ventures and innovation ecosystem enablers in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Rwanda. This work is generously sponsored by Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the Research and Innovation Systems for Africa (The RISA Fund) project.

The delivery partners are:
GrowthAfrica <https://growthafrica.com/>
Systemic Innovation <https://www.systemicinnovation.work/>

For further information, please connect with us at contact@systemicinnovation.work
To learn more about the RISA Fund visit <https://www.risa-fund.org/>