



Morocco Venture Studio & Corporate VC Unconference 2025

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Digital Collective Africa (DCA)



About Digital Collective Africa

Digital Collective Africa is a collective of African investors, incubators, accelerators, and founders who aim to support early-stage startups.

We work together on projects to limit friction and offer more transparency within the ecosystems.

We believe in the power of the collective to leverage individuals' talents.



<https://www.digitalcollective.africa/>



ATTENDEES

Over 16 participants, from 3 continents, representing 9 countries were present at the two-day Morocco Ventures Studio & Corporate VC Unconference which took place at the White Camel Luxury Camp in the Agafay Stone Desert in Morocco

ECOSYSTEM

Batazia, ENRICH in Africa Center, U-Investors



VENTURE STUDIOS

1MoreThing, Domseeds, MStudio, Methys Labs



ACCELERATORS

AfricArena, GIZ SAIS



INVESTORS

Breega, EQ2 Ventures, Ring Capital, Verod-Kepple Africa Ventures



CORPORATE VCS

Les Domaines Agricole, UM6P Ventures



ENABLERS

DCA, Digital Africa





- Decoding Venture Studios & Corporate Innovation: Models, Strategies & Impact
- Aligning Forces for Innovation: Partnership Models for Venture Studios, Corporates and GPs to Boost African Dealflow
- Exit Paths: Leveraging Venture Studios and Corporate Partnerships to Increase Liquidity
- Zoom-in: Moroccan Ecosystem As a Use Case

KEY DISCUSSION AREAS



Introduction to Digital Collective Africa Purpose

Presented by Christophe Viarnaud, AfricArena founder & CEO

Born in 2019, the Digital Collective Africa (DCA) is teamwork with a mission to **create open-source tools for investment facilitation** between founders and investors. On-going projects under current working groups include the following:



Governance Tool Kit
for best practices.



Standardized Documentation
e.g. standardised term sheets.



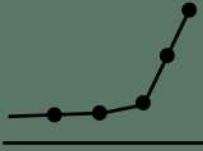
Due Diligence Checklist
for various markets.



<https://www.digitalcollective.africa/>



Policy Advocacy
around Startup Acts and other
regulations.



Valuation Fundamentals
for high growth startups.



Building Ecosystem Bridges
of innovation between different
ecosystems.

Digital Collective Africa has 304 active contributors to its Digital Community

Contributions from all who
use tools - from investors and
investment organisations to
Founders' Organizations and
ESOs.



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Decoding Venture Studios & Corporate Innovation: Models, Strategies & Impact

Session Led by Christophe Viarnaud, co-founder & CEO at AfricArena



Venture Studios Discussion: Discussing the Venture Studio Model in Africa

Participants discussed and emphasized the potential of the venture studio model over the traditional venture capital model, citing a need for new funding models to adapt to local contexts due to the lack of qualified deal flow, thus necessitating innovative approaches to facilitate and encourage growth within the African startup, funding and investment landscape. Venture studios play an important role within Africa's rapidly evolving tech, investment and innovation landscape as they aim to create, nurture, cultivate and develop innovative solutions to challenging problems in their communities through forward thinking, cutting-edge start-ups.

Early on in the discussions, participants asked the question, "what truly defines a venture studio?" and debated what the main criteria are that defines a venture studio with a focus on Africa's landscape. A venture studio in essence, is an organization that builds and launches startups. During this discussion, participants came up with the following criteria which are key elements that define what a venture studio is as defined in the following bullet points:





Venture Studios Definition

- **Co-founding Process:** Participants emphasized that "the key core and the definition of venture studio is the co-founding process." Unlike accelerators or VCs, venture studios actively participate, alongside founders, in creating and launching startups - the role of the entrepreneurs in the founding team is just as important as that of the studio.
- **Equity Position:** Venture studios typically take a significant minority stake (around 25%) in exchange for their contributions to ensure startups have enough shares for further investing rounds.
- **Resource Provision:** Beyond capital, studios provide technical assistance, shared services, and operational support.
- **Active Management:** Venture studios remain actively involved in startup operations during the early stages, sometimes with the power to change founding teams.
- **Idea Validation:** Many venture studios validate ideas before matching them with founders, rather than starting with founder-led concepts.

A venture studio can also be known as a startup studio. What defines a true startup studio compared to software boutiques is that the ownership of the tech or intellectual property must reside within the startup, not the studio. If the intellectual property resides with the startup studio and not the startup, then the startup studio is not a true startup studio but rather seen as a SME.



Timeline of the Venture Studio - Founder Relationship

A venture studio is defined by the type of assets it creates as the support provided must be designed to build VC-backable startups, which means: strong founders, a minority stake held by the studio, and IP owned by the startup. Participants discussed timelines for venture studio in light of the founder relationship and discovered that the venture studio-founder relationship follows a distinct evolution as outlined on the next page:



Timeline of the Venture Studio - Founder Relationship

After defining a set of criteria that defines what a venture studio is, participants discussed timelines for venture studio in light of the founder relationship and discovered that the venture studio-founder relationship follows a distinct evolution as outlined on the next page:

- **Initial Phase (0-6 months):** Studios engage in idea validation and founder matching. They either recruit founders for pre-validated ideas or work with existing founders to refine concepts.
- **Development Phase (6-18 months):** Studios provide technical assistance, initial funding, and shared services. During this period, one participant mentioned they supported projects for about 18 months, though this varied between studios (16-24 months at different organizations).
- **Transition Phase:** After securing seed funding, the founders and venture studio partners work together to outline and implement the steps required to create the “startup” asset and turn an idea into a VC-backable company. Founders often move out of the studio's physical space, while the studio retains board representation and a significant equity stake (typically around 25%).
- **Post-Seed Support:** Studios remain involved as board members and strategic advisors but with diminishing operational involvement as the startup matures.

A key insight shared was the challenge of maintaining founder continuity as during the discussions, one studio mentioned never having a case where two original co-founders stayed together throughout the entire journey, highlighting the importance of the studio as a stabilizing force. After establishing these two concepts, the definition of what a venture studio is, and the venture studio-founder relationship evolution and timeline, participants spent some time discussing the processes and methodologies of how venture studio raise funds. This was a very interesting discussion given that there are more than one venture studio model.



Raising Funds as a Venture Studio & The Different Funding Models

Upon establishing the definition of a venture studio, and the evolution of the venture studio-founder relationship the discussion turned to the important topic of how venture studios raise funds, and the different funding models used to raise capital. The following is an outline of the different funding strategies venture studios may employ:

- **Dual Entity Structure:** One approach involves separating technical assistance from investment functions which allows for external validation and follow-on investment. One such example is Mstudio which partnered with Ring Capital to provide investment validation and follow-on capabilities.
- **Corporate Funding:** Some studios operate with corporate backing, like the agriculture company mentioned that funds its studio operations directly.
- **Self-Funding Through Services:** Methys Labs funds its venture studio through revenue from its tech services business, essentially reinvesting profits into startup creation.
- **External VC Partnerships:** Several studios established partnerships with VCs to validate their startup ideas and secure follow-on funding capabilities.

Unconference participants noted that there is a tension between providing adequate funding for startups while maintaining the studio's sustainability. Most studios took minority positions (around 25%) in their startups, acting as minority co-founders and to ensure that founders retain enough shares for future investment rounds.





Role of AI and No-Code Tech Tools

As participants discussed the benefits of startups using AI and no-code tech tools as part of their MVPs, it was unanimously agreed that eventually, there would be a need for a CTO to come in at a later stage to provide technical leadership and accountability so startups can begin to scale as both scalability and technical leadership are critical for long-term growth. One participant noted that if you build something out of a no-code app platform such as Flutter or Bubble, the final product and IP is yours, and another participant further clarified that once a no-code platform is successful, full stack development can commence.

Given that AI is a common theme across the African continent as not only is AI causing tectonic shifts within the African and global business landscape, it is also transforming how people approach and solve challenging problems. While AI on one hand remains a polarizing issue in Africa, governments across the African continent are beginning take note as they realise the vast potential AI has to drive innovation and economic growth, fast-track Africa's development, improve the continent's digital infrastructure and digital sovereignty, build data centres, refine regulations and help companies generate significant ROI through disruptive technologies.

Unconference participants outlined the successful uses of AI and no-code tech in startups in the following bullet points:

- **Rapid Prototyping:** One studio representative detailed how they use no-code tools to quickly validate ideas before committing to full development, creating a "4-month gap" between no-code apps and starting actual coding.
- **Founder Empowerment:** No-code platforms enable founders from non-technical backgrounds (like farmers) to participate in building their products.
- **Cost Efficiency:** These tools allow studios to manage multiple startups with limited technical resources.
- **Success Stories:** Participants shared examples of successful businesses built entirely on no-code platforms like Bubble and WordPress, with one example generating €70 million in revenue.
- **Product-Customer Alignment:** No-code tools enable rapid iteration based on customer feedback, with one participant noting, "I meet the client, the client says 'the date is written like this, it's very confusing,' I change it direct."



Venture Studio KPIs

It goes without saying that Impact KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are a crucial metric in any business as these metrics are a visible data room of measurable values that demonstrate how effectively a company is meeting its key business objectives. In essence, impact KPIs help operators align day-to-day operations with long-term business goals by identifying critical areas that impact performance.

Impact KPIs are more critical when ensuring a venture studio runs smoothly given that venture studios systematically build startups from the ground up. Some of the critical impact KPIs venture studios include in their data rooms include the following: Alignment across multiple ventures, resource allocation and efficiency, startup validation and iteration, investor readiness and transparency, risk management, and scalability tracking to name a few.

Impact KPIs for venture studios that build startups from scratch measure both financial performance and broader strategic, operational, and social impact. Because venture studios are hybrid entities (part operator, part investor), their KPIs must reflect both their internal efficiency and the success of their portfolio companies.

Unconference participants took these metrics further as they discussed several key impact KPI metrics used to measure venture studio success, which are outlined as follows:

Operational KPIs (Studio-Level Efficiency)

- **Startup Creation Rate:** Number of ventures launched per year.
- **Time to MVP (Minimum Viable Product):** Average time taken from ideation to MVP launch.
- **Cost per Startup Launched:** Total cost to bring a venture to MVP stage or first external funding.
- **Internal Resource Utilization:** Efficiency in using shared resources (e.g., tech, design, legal).
- **Founder Recruitment Time:** Time taken to find and onboard external co-founders or CEOs.



Portfolio Performance KPIs

- **Portfolio Survival Rate:** % of startups still operating after 1, 3, and 5 years.
- **Follow-on Funding Rate:** % of ventures that raise external capital after studio involvement.
- **Portfolio Company Valuation Growth:** Total and average increase in valuation of launched startups.
- **Return on Studio Capital (ROSC):** Value generated per dollar invested by the studio in its ventures.
- **Exits and Exit Value:** Number of successful exits (acquisitions/IPOs) and total exit value.

Impact & Strategic KPIs

- **Mission Alignment Score:** % of startups aligned with the studio's core mission or thesis (e.g., climate tech, health, fintech).
- **Diversity Metrics:** % of startups with diverse leadership (gender, race, etc.).
- **Jobs Created:** Total number of jobs created across portfolio companies.
- **ESG/SDG Impact Score:** Alignment with ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) or UN Sustainable Development Goals, if applicable.

Reputation & Influence KPIs

- **Co-investor Quality:** Number and caliber of VCs or strategic partners that co-invest.
- **Brand Awareness/PR Mentions:** Media coverage, awards, and industry recognition.
- **Inbound Deal Flow:** Quality and quantity of ideas, talent, or partners approaching the studio.





Sustainability and Operational Strategies

When it comes to the topic of sustainability and operational strategies in venture studios, it must be emphasized that venture studios are in the business of exiting companies, not launching them. The main revenue line is equity returns. Other revenue lines can be presented as outlined in the following:

- **Service-Based Revenue:** Some studios operate complementary businesses (like tech services) that generate revenue to fund the studio operations.
- **Corporate Funding:** Corporate-backed studios secure ongoing funding from parent companies, often in exchange for innovation and strategic insights.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborations with universities, corporations, and investors help studios access resources and knowledge.
- **Equity Returns:** Long-term sustainability depends on a partial exit strategy to refinance operations.
- **Early Customer Revenue:** An indicator of the sustainability of the startup not the venture studio as the revenue generated by a startup directly reflects its market validation and ability to create a sustainable business model. In short, the studio's sustainability is more tied to its ability to consistently create and support successful ventures.
- **Technical Assistance Facilities:** Separating technical assistance from investment functions allows for more specialized fundraising and resource allocation.





What Are the Success Factors That Makes a Venture Studio Successful?

Unconference participants robustly discussed what the key success factors are that makes a venture studio successful. The group was able to collate a list of a few success factors that govern and determine a venture studio's success, and which are critical in attracting the right founders. These success factors include but are not limited to the following:

- Strategic execution and adaptation to transform the startup ecosystem landscape;
- A team of experienced founders;
- Founder-Problem Fit Support;
- Clear, fair incentives;
- The strategic use of Entrepreneurs in Residence;
- Efficient MVP development and speed to market;
- Optimised resources and strategic allocation;
- Credibility where a reputable studio backs a startup;
- Access to knowledge;
- Access to early capital;
- Talent access;
- Methodology and process;
- Repeatable venture building process;
- Strong network and vibrant ecosystem;
- Supportive culture and mentorship;
- A clear spin-out path;
- The procurement of a startup's first customers.

These factors are vital to a venture studio's growth, success and longevity as they play a role in determining the venture studio's ability to efficiently launch and scale profitable ventures, contributing to higher success rates and returns for investors.



A DFI Perspective on Working with Venture Studios

It is important for venture studios to partner with Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), particularly within Africa's tech, innovation and investment landscape. DFIs are either government-backed or multilateral financial organizations that are able to provide venture studios with access to funding, expertise and mentorship, access to networking and collaboration opportunities, alignment with impact goals, risk mitigation, credibility and legitimacy, government and policy advocacy to name a few. During the Unconference, GIZ SAIS shared several insights about some key focus areas DFIs look at when working with venture studios, outlined as follows:

- **A Focus on Underserved Sectors:** GIZ SAIS specifically targets venture studios working in agriculture and climate tech to address funding gaps in these sectors.
- **Beyond Acceleration:** GIZ SAIS evolved from a pure acceleration focus to an "ecosystem builder" approach, working with multiple venture studios across markets.
- **Geographic Diversification:** GIZ SAIS partners with venture studios in Nigeria and Kenya, mentioning specific studios like Fast Forward and Pyramidia Ventures.
- **Capital Gap Filling:** GIZ SAIS provide working capital loans to startups to help them build credit scores and access bank financing.
- **Scaling Challenges:** GIZ SAIS looks at how venture studios can scale effectively.
- **Unicorn Alternative:** GIZ SAIS questioned whether the traditional VC model of "2% management fee and betting on unicorns" works for sectors like African agtech, suggesting venture studios might be better suited to building "very strong multinational enterprises" rather than unicorns.



Key Components Of A Partnership Ecosystem for Venture Studios

Within the venture studios landscape, a partnership ecosystem is vital as it refers to a strong network of collaborators, supporters, investors, and stakeholders that contribute to the successful creation, scaling, and growth of startups within the studio. These partnerships help the venture studio achieve its goals, whether it is launching new ventures, gaining access to markets, securing funding, or leveraging expertise. This partnership ecosystem also facilitates the flow of ideas, resources, and capital necessary to build ventures in an efficient and scalable manner. Unconference participants identified several critical partners who are key to unlocking venture studio success with Africa's tech, innovation and investment landscape:

- **Capital Partners:** VCs and angel investors who provide follow-on funding capabilities.
- **Corporate Partners:** Providing first customers, domain expertise, and in some cases direct funding.
- **Academic Institutions:** Universities were mentioned as sources of both technology and talent and venture studios play a role in helping universities commercialize academic innovations.
- **Technical Talent Pools:** Access to developers and technical experts is crucial for studio operations.
- **Talent Development:** Studios can develop entrepreneurial talent in markets with limited startup experience.
- **Capital Efficiency:** In capital-constrained environments, studios offer a more efficient model for startup creation.
- **Domain Experts:** Industry specialists who can validate ideas and provide market insights.
- **Development Partners:** Organizations like GIZ that can provide additional technical assistance and specialized funding.
- **Other Venture Studios:** Several participants expressed interest in cross-studio collaboration for knowledge sharing.



The Venture Studio Model in Africa: Navigating Challenges, Unlocking Opportunities

Venture studios in Africa operate at the intersection of innovation and complexity. While the model holds immense potential, it must contend with a unique set of challenges across the continent.

Some of the key challenges African venture studios face in a multifaceted landscape include the following:

- **High Operational Costs:** Infrastructure, logistics, and resource deployment often demand significant capital.
- **Founder Dynamics:** Balancing internal teams with external co-founders can create alignment and equity tensions.
- **Limited Access to Capital:** Funding constraints—especially at early stages—can slow momentum and limit runway.
- **Resource Allocation:** Building multiple ventures simultaneously strains limited time, talent, and capital.
- **Scaling Constraints:** Fragmented markets and uneven infrastructure complicate regional or pan-African scale-ups.
- **Exit Path Uncertainty:** Fewer precedents for successful exits challenge valuation and investor confidence.
- **Role Ambiguity:** Studios often juggle roles as co-founders, incubators, and investors, creating governance friction.
- **Regulatory and Political Instability:** Inconsistent policies across borders add legal and compliance burdens.
- **Talent Gaps:** Skilled tech and product talent remains scarce or concentrated in few hubs.
- **Market Access Barriers:** Distribution, customer acquisition, and digital reach remain uneven across regions.





Despite these hurdles, Africa presents unique opportunities and a fertile ground for venture studios to make outsized impact as follows:

- **Growing Consumer Markets:** A young, mobile-first population drives demand across sectors.
- **Untapped Market Gaps:** Studios can identify and address needs in underserved industries and regions.
- **Impact-Driven Innovation:** Social entrepreneurship and inclusive tech present viable and meaningful investment theses.
- **Emerging Tech Enablers:** AI, no-code platforms, and mobile infrastructure lower barriers to building and scaling.
- **Corporate Collaborations:** Strategic partnerships offer funding, market access, and validation pathways.
- **Digital Transformation Drive:** Studios are poised to lead Africa's leapfrogging into digital-first solutions.
- **Ecosystem Development:** By nurturing talent and networks, studios help shape a more resilient startup landscape.
- **Pan-African Collaboration:** Cross-border studio models and knowledge sharing are increasingly viable and valuable.





Aligning Forces for Innovation: Partnership Models for Venture Studios, Corporates and GPs to Boost African Dealflow

Session Led by Aude Juglard, Head of Corporate Finance at Mstudio



The Case for Innovation Partnership Models in Africa to Boost African Dealflow

Unconference participants who spanned the entire VC value chain agreed that it is important for there to be an alignment of forces for innovation through strategic partnership models between venture studios, corporates and general partners (GPs) to boost African dealflow, particularly with regards to the problem that needs to be solved when it comes to dealflow - is it a question of quantity or quality?

The dealflow challenge for African venture studios, especially given the dynamic, rapidly evolving nature of both Africa's venture capital ecosystem and the African market is both a quantity and a quality issue—but more crucially, it's a matter of fit and filtration. Let's unpack this.

In many African ecosystems, when it comes to **quantity**, the absolute number of investable or studio-ready ideas is limited due to:

- A small pool of repeat founders or experienced operators;
- Lower startup activity outside major hubs such as Lagos, Nairobi, Cape Town;
- Limited exposure to venture-building models among early-stage entrepreneurs.

Quantity is a problem in less mature or under-networked ecosystems where pipeline generation hasn't reached critical mass.





When quantity exists, especially in hubs, the challenge shifts to **quality** and ideas may lack one or all of the following:

- Strong market validation or defensibility;
- Experienced teams;
- Clear scalability;
- Alignment with the studio's mandate or thesis.

Quality becomes the core issue in more mature environments, where many ideas are early, duplicative, or misaligned.

The real issue we should be looking at and addressing is **dealflow fit**. For many venture studios, it is less about "how many ideas" are available and more about:

- Which ideas are right for the studio model (where the studio builds from scratch or co-builds)?
- Which founders are open to the studio's level of involvement, equity structure, and long-term vision?

In light of this, it is clear that venture studios, especially those operating in the African venture capital landscape need **filtered, aligned dealflow**, not just volume or raw talent.



How African Venture Studios Can Solve the Dealflow Problem

1. Build, Don't Wait (Internal Ideation Engine)

- Run **sprints or venture labs** internally to generate ideas based on validated market gaps;
- Use **data and field research** to source pain points, not just founders.

2. Create Founder Pipelines

- Partner with universities, incubators, and accelerators to identify potential founders early.



- Launch entrepreneur-in-residence (EIR) programs to nurture promising talent;
- Build **founder academies** or bootcamps focused on venture studio collaboration.

3. Leverage Local Networks

- Tap into local hubs and diaspora networks to find founders with domain expertise and cultural fluency;
- Engage NGOs, development agencies, and corporates to surface problem-solvers in specific sectors such as agritech and healthtech.

4. Niche Down

- Focus on **sector-specific studio theses** such as climate, fintech, logistics);
- Curated focus reduces noise and improves inbound dealflow quality.

5. Use Tech to Scale Outreach

- Build a **submission portal** or scouting platform;
- Use **AI or algorithmic filters** to evaluate early signals (team strength, market potential, traction);

6. Co-Create with Corporates

- Collaborate on **innovation challenges** that surface validated pain points and scalable ideas;
- Use corporates as **channels for pilots and market access**, reducing the validation burden.

7. Invest in Brand & Thought Leadership

- Publishing insights, success stories, and venture theses increases inbound dealflow;
- Founders trust studios that show clarity, credibility, and consistency.



After looking at the different ways African venture studios can solve dealflow challenges, it is clear that African venture studios need curated, aligned, and scalable dealflow. Solving this means:

- Engineering your own pipeline;
- Training or attracting founder talent;
- Filtering ideas that are right for the studio build model, not just the traditional VC route.



The Deal Flow Challenge: Beyond Quantity

The discussion revealed that Africa's venture capital ecosystem faces a significant qualification gap rather than a shortage of entrepreneurs or ideas. Participants agreed that while thousands of entrepreneurs emerge across the continent, very few reach the level of structure and traction required for institutional investment. Integrated data shows that Africa's venture capital ecosystem faces a significant qualification gap, rather than a shortage of entrepreneurs or ideas.

While thousands of entrepreneurs emerge across Africa, there is a substantial qualification gap that hinders the progression of many ventures to institutional investment readiness and this is visible in the following metrics:

- **Application to Investment Conversion Rates:** A venture studio reported receiving 1,000–1,400 applications annually but converting only about 1–2% into supported startups. Even from this small percentage, nearly 40% drop out before reaching investment committee review. This illustrates a dramatic narrowing from raw entrepreneurial talent to investment-ready companies.
- **Seed Round Activity in Francophone Africa:** Several participants estimated fewer than 10 quality seed rounds ($\geq \$1\text{M}$) occurred in Francophone Africa over the previous 12 months, highlighting the severe



shortage of structured opportunities despite abundant early-stage activity. For instance, according to a [Double Feathers Partners report](#), in Q1 2023, among 177 African startups, 30% were in seed rounds, indicating a predominance of early-stage ventures.

The Funnel: From Raw Talent to Investment-Ready Ventures

The venture capital funnel across Africa reflects a significant qualification gap. The funnel outlined below helps people to illustrate and envision how large numbers of entrepreneurs and startup ideas in Africa are progressively filtered out through each stage of the venture capital pipeline. This results in very few ventures that are actually investment-ready, illustrating the disparity between inputs (entrepreneurial talent) and outputs (investment-ready startups).

1. **Raw Talent:** Thousands of entrepreneurs emerge across the continent.
2. **Initial Applications:** Venture studios receive a substantial number of applications annually.
3. **Screening and Evaluation:** A small percentage of applications progress to the next stage.
4. **Investment Committee Review:** A further narrowing occurs, with many ventures dropping out before reaching this stage.
5. **Seed Rounds:** A limited number of ventures secure seed funding, often under \$1 million.
6. **Series A and Beyond:** Fewer ventures progress to later funding stages, indicating a bottleneck in scaling opportunities.

This funnel helps to shine a spotlight on the following:

1. **Highlight the Attrition Rate:** It shows how many startups don't survive past application, screening, or early validation stages, even if the ecosystem seems vibrant at the surface.
2. **Reframe the Dealflow Issue:** Rather than a shortage of ideas, the problem is the lack of structure, support, and readiness at each stage, emphasizing the need for better startup grooming and venture support mechanisms.
3. **Create a Diagnostic Tool:** The funnel serves as a framework for studios, accelerators, and investors to assess where interventions are most needed - founder readiness, MVP development, or capital access.
4. **Justify Strategic Interventions:** It supports the case for venture studios and ecosystem builders to play a more active role in bridging the gap, by helping startups move from raw potential to investable businesses.



How Venture Studios Qualify and Validate Deal Flow

Venture studios validate opportunities within the landscape in different ways compared to traditional incubators and accelerators. Unlike accelerators that select from existing startups, venture studios often create ventures from scratch and based on identified opportunities which gives them more control over the validation process. Some of these validation differences are outlined as follows:

Venture Studio Dealflow Qualification Framework

1. Ideation Stage: Objective: Validate the problem, the market opportunity, and the feasibility of a solution before forming a venture.

Ideation Stage Qualification Methods:

- **Problem Discovery Workshops:** Use human-centered design, ethnographic research, or expert interviews to deeply understand a pain point;
- **Market Mapping:** Assess total addressable market (TAM), underserved geographies, and macro-trends (e.g., informal economy, digitization);
- **Data-driven Sourcing:** Leverage proprietary or third-party datasets (e.g., satellite data, mobile usage, fintech adoption) to identify structural inefficiencies;
- **Expert Panels:** Validate ideas with sector insiders or potential customers before allocating resources;
- **Opportunity Scorecards:** Studios often use internal rubrics that assess ideas on dimensions like urgency, market size, regulatory barriers, monetization clarity, and founder attractiveness.

Critical filters:

- Does the founder show grit, coachability, and clarity of vision?
- Do they have domain expertise or unique access for example in distribution, and customers?
- Are they willing to co-build under a studio-led equity and governance structure?

2. Pre-Seed Stage: Objective: Validate early product hypotheses and the pathway to MVP.





2. Pre-Seed Stage: Objective: Validate early product hypotheses and the pathway to MVP.

Pre-Seed Stage Qualification Methods:

- **Rapid Prototyping & Smoke Tests:** Studios deploy no-code tools, landing pages, or Figma prototypes to test market interest before building;
- **User Interviews & Feedback Loops:** Engage 10–50 early adopters to validate core assumptions;
- **Lean Canvas / Business Model Validation:** Document and test hypotheses around distribution, pricing, and unit economics;
- **Technical Scoping:** Evaluate if the product can be built efficiently using existing tech stacks or off-the-shelf components;
- **Pre-commitment Signals:** Letters of intent (LOIs), waitlists, or pilot agreements used to gauge early traction.

Critical Filters:

- Can an MVP be shipped in less than **90 days**?
- Is there **clear feedback** from users confirming need and interest?
- Are there **early signals of commercial viability** such as pricing tests, pilot success and more?

3. Product-Market Fit Stage: Objective: Determine if the product solves a validated problem at scale and retains users effectively.

Product-Market Fit Stage Qualification Methods:

- **Cohort Retention Analysis:** Measure engagement and repeat usage among early customers;
- **Net Promoter Score (NPS) & Customer Interviews:** Gauge user enthusiasm and organic growth potential;
- **Growth Channels Validation:** Identify scalable and cost-effective acquisition channels (paid, referral, sales-led);
- **Churn & Usage Data:** Analyze feature adoption, drop-off points, and usage frequency;
- **Revenue Quality:** For monetizing startups, look at MRR growth, upsells, and LTV/CAC ratio.



Critical Filters:

- Are customers returning without being pushed?
- Is there organic growth or word-of-mouth traction?
- Can usage and revenue grow predictably with additional investment?

4. Seed Readiness Stage: Objective: Assess whether the venture is ready for external investment (institutional or angel).

Seed Readiness Stage Qualification Methods:

- **Investment Narrative Building:** Studio and founder co-create a compelling vision, metrics, and roadmap;
- **Data Room Preparation:** Validate financial models, cap tables, MVP metrics, go-to-market strategy;
- **Investor Dry Runs:** Practice pitching to friendly investors and get honest feedback;
- **Team Readiness Check:** Ensure founding team is complete or has clear hiring roadmap for gaps such as CTO, COO;
- **Legal & IP Diligence:** Clean up governance, incorporation, equity splits, and IP assignments to remove red flags.

Critical filters:

- Is the company **fundable within current investor appetite** in the region or vertical?
- Do metrics (traction, churn, CAC, retention) reflect **scalability**?
- Is the founder **ready for investor-facing roles**?



The Different Venture Studio Models

There are different venture studio models and during the Unconference, participants identified four different venture studio models and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each model briefly outlined as follows:

1. Founder-First Model:

- **Advantage:** Strong founder commitment, better market alignment.
- **Disadvantage:** More time-intensive for studio, harder to systematise.

2. Idea-First Model:

- **Advantage:** Faster startup creation, better control over portfolio direction.
- **Disadvantage:** Challenge of finding founders who can execute on pre-defined ideas.

3. Corporate Studio Model:

- **Advantage:** Guaranteed market access, built-in first customers.
- **Disadvantage:** Potential limitations on founders' autonomy, may constrain innovation.

4. In-house Tech vs. Tech Transfer Model:

- Some studios keep tech development in-house.
 - **Advantage:** Better quality control, shared resources.
 - **Disadvantage:** Resource allocation conflicts between startups.
- Others transfer tech completely to startups
 - **Advantage:** Clearer ownership, better founder autonomy.
 - **Disadvantage:** Higher initial cost, potential capability gaps.



The Evolving Role of Venture Studios in Africa's Venture Capital Ecosystem

Africa's entrepreneurial landscape has undergone a profound transformation over the past two decades, with the venture studio model emerging as a strategic catalyst in the evolution of the continent's startup ecosystem. Unlike traditional incubators or accelerators, venture studios play a more hands-on role by building startups in-house—offering capital, talent, operational support, and strategic guidance from inception to scale.

This section explores the growing relevance of venture studios in Africa, the systemic challenges they help overcome, and the unique opportunities they create for founders, investors, and markets alike. As global and local investors increasingly turn their attention to Africa as a frontier for innovation, venture studios are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between raw entrepreneurial energy and investor-ready ventures.

A Two-Decade Shift in Africa's Entrepreneurial Landscape

Two decades ago, Africa's startup activity was stifled by limited infrastructure, political instability, and constrained capital flows. Today, the ecosystem looks remarkably different—shaped by digital acceleration, demographic momentum, and a surge in entrepreneurial ambition. Venture studios are tapping into this shift, building startups that address large-scale problems with scalable, tech-enabled solutions.

The following macro-trends underpin Africa's rapid entrepreneurial and digital evolution:

- **Digital Access & Mobile-First Growth:** Internet penetration across Africa has soared—driven largely by mobile connectivity—enabling millions to access online tools, education, and global networks. This digital leap is foundational to the proliferation of tech startups;
- **Youth-Driven Innovation:** With 60% of the population under the age of 25, Africa is home to one of the world's youngest workforces. This demographic dividend fuels demand for new career paths and drives digital-native entrepreneurship;
- **Expansion of Support Infrastructure:** An expanding network of accelerators, incubators, innovation hubs, and venture studios is creating stronger pipelines for talent and capital. These platforms offer not just capital, but 'also mentorship, community, and structured growth pathways.





- **Cultural Shift Toward Entrepreneurship:** Media exposure, tech success stories, and high-visibility exits have contributed to a shift in mindset—positioning entrepreneurship as a **viable and aspirational career path**;
- **Economic and Employment Necessity:** With formal employment unable to meet the demands of a growing population, entrepreneurship has become both an economic necessity and a creative outlet for problem-solving;
- **Policy and Regulatory Tailwinds:** Governments across the continent are launching **startup acts**, tax incentives, and innovation-friendly regulations to reduce barriers to entry and enhance the attractiveness of local ecosystems.

Why Venture Studios Matter

Venture studios are uniquely equipped to capitalize on these trends by de-risking early-stage innovation and addressing systemic challenges that persist in the African VC funnel—such as founder readiness, startup structuring, and path-to-investment gaps. They do this by:

- **Sourcing and validating ideas aligned with market needs;**
- **Embedding operational expertise and resources into early-stage ventures;**
- **Structuring ventures with institutional funding in mind;**
- **Grooming founders with the mindset and tools needed to scale sustainably.**

As Africa continues to attract attention from global investors, venture studios represent a strategic layer of infrastructure that improves the quality, investability, and resilience of early-stage startups, making them a critical component of the continent's evolving venture capital ecosystem.



Venture Studios: Catalysts for Regional Scaling in Africa's Fragmented Markets

A fundamental challenge for African startups is regional scaling - expanding beyond initial markets to achieve venture-scale growth across a continent defined by geographic diversity, economic disparities, and complex regulatory landscapes. Venture studios play a pivotal role in addressing these barriers, enabling startups to move confidently from local success to regional prominence.

Overcoming Africa's Scaling Barriers

African markets are often too small individually to sustain high-growth ventures, making cross-border expansion essential. However, startups face multiple hurdles in this journey:

- **Market Fragmentation:** Diverse languages, cultures, and consumer behaviors require adaptable go-to-market strategies;
- **Regulatory Complexity:** Differing legal frameworks, licensing requirements, and tax regimes create a challenging compliance landscape;
- **Operational Barriers:** Lack of harmonized accounting standards and business practices complicate financial management and reporting;
- **Network Gaps:** Limited access to cross-border partnerships, distribution channels, and local expertise constrains market entry;
- **Logistics and Infrastructure:** Variability in transport, payment systems, and supply chains can hamper efficient expansion.

How Venture Studios Enable Scalable Growth

Venture studios mitigate these challenges by embedding operational expertise and strategic support directly into startups, accelerating their readiness for regional expansion. Key areas of support include:

- **Market Navigation:** Providing insights and tailored strategies for entry into diverse African markets that are often overlooked by traditional investors;
- **Cross-Border Facilitation:** Assisting with legal compliance, licensing, and partnerships across jurisdictions to reduce friction;
- **Business Model Adaptation:** Designing scalable and flexible business models that accommodate different regulatory and economic contexts;
- **Network Leverage:** Opening doors to local and regional networks, including corporate partners, investors, and advisors critical to expansion;
- **Operational Excellence:** Building robust back-office functions, accounting practices, and governance structures aligned with multi-market operations.





Strategic Impact on the Venture Ecosystem

By supporting startups to scale beyond their home markets, venture studios **increase the pool of investable, venture-ready companies** that can attract larger rounds of funding. This capacity not only enhances individual startup success but also strengthens Africa's overall venture capital ecosystem by:

- **Reducing Investment Risk:** Startups with proven regional traction present lower risks to investors;
- **Driving Market Integration:** Facilitating economic integration through cross-border commerce and innovation diffusion;
- **Building Repeatable Growth Models:** Creating playbooks for future startups to navigate regional scaling more efficiently.

In short, venture studios are critical enablers in transforming Africa's fragmented market landscape into a more cohesive, investable ecosystem, unlocking growth opportunities that extend well beyond national borders.



Venture Studios Function as Qualification Engines

Venture studios function as co-founders of their portfolio companies and play an active role in managing and developing these companies. As a result, venture studios by default act as qualification engines through their systematic processes of identifying, validating, and refining startup ideas and entrepreneurial talent before they fully launch into the market. This process ensures that only the most promising ideas, teams, and solutions are pursued, and those that are likely to succeed receive the necessary resources and attention. Below is a breakdown of how venture studios act as qualification engines:

- **Providing standardized methodologies** for business validation and growth;
- **Establishing proper governance** and management practices from inception;
- **Creating pathways** to first customers through corporate relationships;
- **Helping founders understand** investor expectations at each stage;
- **Offering support** for regional expansion through studio networks.

During the Unconference, several growth-stage investors expressed interest in investing directly in venture studios as a strategy to gain visibility into promising companies before they reach Series A readiness, particularly in underserved markets.



Misalignment of Investment Criteria and African Realities

The misalignment of investment criteria in light of African realities is a significant challenge for venture studios operating in Africa. This is because while venture studios aim to build scalable and sustainable startups, they often encounter friction when trying to align the typical investment models with the unique economic, cultural, and infrastructural conditions found across the African continent. On the next page is an explanation of how and why this misalignment occurs as a result of the following, including a disconnect between traditional venture metrics and African market conditions:



- **Different risk profiles** are reflected in the challenges that often stems from entrepreneurs not fully understanding the growth and return expectations of investors. While Western VC models tend to apply standard benchmarks, decision-makers at global investment firms may not fully appreciate the unique risk profiles and market dynamics in Africa. This gap in mutual understanding can lead to misaligned expectations rather than a fundamental mismatch in the markets themselves.
- **Cultural and behavioural misunderstandings** that can cause friction between the expectations of investors and the realities of doing business in Africa.
- **A misalignment in revenue expectations** as not all startups may scale rapidly and show exponential revenue growth due to the way African markets move. This is clearly seen in how the “2% management fee and betting on unicorns” approach is not a one-size fits all approach for all sectors, particularly African agtech.
- **Locally-appropriate financial models** and return expectations need development.
- **Infrastructure and technological gaps** as some venture studios operate with the assumption that startups will scale using technologies and infrastructure that are often not available or are unreliable in certain African regions.

It is important that venture studios operating in Africa acknowledge that they need to adapt their investment models to the realities of the African market. Such adaptations include includes recalibrating their investment criteria, recognizing the unique risks and opportunities present in African markets, and understanding that growth may be slower and more incremental than in developed countries. Localization, cultural awareness, and understanding the regional challenges with the African continent are key to reducing the misalignment between global investment criteria and African realities when it comes to building and establishing venture studios in Africa. To align better with African realities, venture studios should:

- **Adapt their expectations on growth** to consider regional variations in market adoption, infrastructure, and consumer behavior.
- **Build stronger local networks** to navigate regulatory, legal, and bureaucratic challenges.
- **Bridge ecosystem gaps** through building collaboration and frameworks.
- **Tailor business models** to regional needs, and develop localized solutions rather than relying on global templates.
- **Engage with African investors and funders** who understand the local market and can provide the necessary capital for scaling.



Exit Pathways and Liquidity Strategies for Venture Studios

During the Unconference, participants spoke about and described several exit strategies that are adapted to align to African realities. These exit strategies which take into account the day-to-day realities of the African markets and keeping an eye on market maturity and liquidity constraints as well as investor appetite and expectations include **partial exits at Series A; consolidation; cash flow focus; secondary sales** which are emerging as crucial liquidity tools; **secondary discounts** and **failure rate optimization** which sees venture studios focusing on reducing failure rates rather than looking for and hunting unicorns.

One of the key insights that emerged during this discussion was how corporations in Africa don't necessarily buy startups for revenue in strategic M&A moves as they already generate significant revenue. They buy these startups for data and innovation purposes as part of their broader strategy to stay competitive, optimize operations and enhance growth within an increasingly competitive African market marked by rapid digital transformation, evolving consumer demands and a changing business environment. It is noteworthy to note that CEOs of major companies such as Orange, MTN, Total, and major banks in some countries are investing as limited partners (LPs) in VC funds with an eye toward potential acquisition opportunities to expand their horizons and stay ahead of their competitors.



Exit Paths: Leveraging Venture Studios and Corporate Partnerships to Increase Liquidity

Session Led by Dolapo Olayoriju, Investment Analyst at Verod-Kepple Africa Ventures



The Case for Exit Paths for Africa-Focused Venture Studios

For venture studios operating in Africa, developing clear and viable exit paths is not just a matter of generating returns for investors, but also ensuring the long-term sustainability and scalability of the startups they create. In the African context, where market dynamics and opportunities are unique, exit strategies and liquidity events become even more crucial for ensuring the continued health of the venture ecosystem.

The question is, why do exit paths matter for venture studios operating within the African landscape? The core issue often lies in entrepreneurs not fully grasping the importance of having a clear exit strategy. In most venture ecosystems, a well-defined exit—whether through acquisition, merger, or IPO—is essential for investors, founders, and venture studios to realize returns on their investments. Understanding this expectation is crucial to aligning efforts and securing long-term success.

However, in the African context, exit paths are often more complex due to several challenges, including limited exit opportunities, infrastructure gaps, and lower investor confidence. As a result of this, Africa focused venture studios should ideally focus on alternative exit strategies, including corporate partnerships and other innovative approaches to create sustainable liquidity events that enable stakeholders to convert equity into liquid assets, thus ensuring a tangible return on their investment.

Some of the ways Africa-focused venture studios are navigating exit paths include the way they are developing financial models that differ significantly from traditional venture capital approaches to ensure stability, visibility and traction within the African landscape.





Financial Models and Return Expectations

When it comes to financial models, most venture studios, when looking at **target returns** aim for between 5-7x returns, which is typically 6x6x on invested capital. Mstudio, the first mobile startup studio in Francophone Africa invested €6 million in startups, and they expect a return of €36 million in exits.

When looking at a venture studio's **investment structure**, these studios invest on average US\$400,00 per startup for 25% equity which signifies a US\$2 million valuation at pre-seed stage. **Equity ranges** from initial investments typically secure between 10% - 12% equity, with venture studios aiming to increase this equity to between 20% - 25% over a period of time.

From a **cash vs. services** perspective, studios typically offer a combination of cash with a valuation in services package. Such service valuations are valued through a standardized "menu" which ensures transparent pricing.

It must be noted that these are ambitious numbers as most AfricanVC funds struggle to return capital, so venture studios are pioneers in how they approach building and launching multiple startups in parallel to one another.

During the discussions, one studio shared they invested US\$1 million across a dozen small applications, hoping to exit at around US\$6 million. Another highlighted a "co-founder model" targeting 36 startups over four years with average equity ownership of 10-12%. All studios emphasized the importance of more realistic return expectations compared to Silicon Valley's unicorn-hunting approach.



The Different Partnership and Operational Models

To expand on the four different venture studio models, participants did a deep dive in the different partnership and operational models venture studios can have. It is important to note that having a variation of venture studio models is important because each venture studio model caters to **diverse needs and offer various approaches to building and scaling businesses, and ultimately leading to a broader range of successful ventures and a more diversified portfolio**. That being said, venture studios can adopt different structures and strategies depending on the resources, goals, and specific industries they target. Participants looked at the venture studio partnerships and operational model and identified several different partnerships operational models that include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Co-founder Model:** Co-founders either build startups from scratch or enter startups 3 - 6 months after ideation.
- **Service-Value Exchange:** Venture studios providing business development, AI services and technical resources worth 100K+ in exchange for equity.
- **Micro-Fund Structure:** A venture studio micro-fund ranges from between 4-10 million USD to provide cash alongside services.
- **Syndicate Approach:** This is a hybrid model that combines the principles of venture studios with syndicate investing which uses a network of angel investors, venture capital or other capital partners to bridge funding gaps until micro-funds are established.
- **Corporate Venture Studios:** These venture studios focus on building solutions from corporate pain points, with corporate clients integrated from inception.
- **Copycat Model:** These venture studios focus on replicating successful business ideas or proven business models from one market and adapting them to new regions or markets. This model requires the implementation and execution of between 3-6 similar successful ventures elsewhere.
- **Internal Projects:** An Internal Projects Venture Studio is a type of venture studio that primarily focuses on creating and developing startups from within the organization or corporation itself, rather than externally or through external partnerships. These internal projects are typically spun off or incubated within the corporate structure to leverage the company's existing resources, expertise, and strategic goals. Some of these studios launch one company per year that they fully own (80-90%) and fund internally.



Corporate Venture Studio Considerations

The challenges corporate venture studios operating in Africa face are unique, and include but are not limited to the following, balancing **strategic corporate goals with venture financial returns**; ensuring a balance in **ownership perception** as corporate ownership or equity above 25% has the potential to deter future investors; maintaining a fine line when it comes to **rights and preferences** as acquisition rights and preferences can kill future deals during due diligence processes; analyse competitor relationships as a willingness to sell to competitors varies greatly among corporate venture studios; encouraging **spin-off challenges** and navigating any difficulties that could be encountered in convincing internal employees to leave for entrepreneurial ventures; skilfully handling the dual client-investor role as corporate venture studios provide both investment and first customer relationships and putting an **emphasis on a no-code focus** in the initial stages to reduce technical debt.



Considering Business Development as Core Service

Both venture studios and corporate venture studios are increasingly seeing business development as a core service within their studios as business development is critical to their overall success, profitability and longevity. Business development directly impacts venture studios' ability to scale startups, build market traction, create partnerships, secure customers, and identify growth opportunities, especially with **B2B clients, lead generation, team transfers**, looking at **commission alternatives** which can be seen as part of equity investment, and leveraging corporate relationships to secure first customers to build up **customer relationships**.



Navigating Legal and Jurisdictional Challenges, Market Expansion Strategies and Collaborative Ecosystem Building in Africa

Venture studios operating in Africa face a number of legal and jurisdictional challenges that can potentially impact their ability to scale startups, navigate regulatory environments, and protect intellectual property. These challenges stem from the diverse legal systems, regulatory frameworks, and economic conditions across African countries. Africa's legal and jurisdictional landscape is complex due to a confluence of historical, linguistic, social and political factors which varies from one country to another. These factors create both opportunities and obstacles for venture studios.

Participants acknowledged the challenges and identified several significant legal challenges in the form of the following: **SAFE Notes Limitations** as SAFE instruments aren't viable in many African jurisdictions; **Delaware Dominance** as most venture studios use Delaware entities despite operational presence in Africa; alternative jurisdictions such as in the Netherlands, UK, UAE and Singapore; a need to **standardize legal frameworks** across African markets as a lack of a standardized framework complicates expansion and **develop standardized valuation methodologies** for pre-revenue companies which helps to build trust and transparency within the ecosystem.

The discussion on the above-mentioned legal and jurisdiction challenges naturally lead to a conversation on market expansion and consolidation strategies venture studios can employ to help their startups expand and scale in new markets. These strategies include **cross-border preparation** where venture studios actively prepare startups for expansion into new African markets; **"arranged marriages"** in which venture studios facilitate connections between similar startups within different markets for potential M&As; helping to create and craft **expansion narratives** through storytelling arcs to attract funding; assessing a market, country or region's currency stability appeal before expansion; creating connections between entrepreneurs across different markets to encourage **network building** and facilitate scaling opportunities.

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, participants emphasised the importance of fostering collaborative ecosystem building approaches through **syndicate building** where investor syndicates are created for early-stage funding; **cross-market networks**; **corporate studio partnerships**; **knowledge sharing**; using open-source resources to create **playbook and resources** and **leveraging generational transition** to raise funding, especially within a new generation of family business leaders between the 35-50 age bracket who are more open to tech acquisitions.



Zoom-in: Moroccan Ecosystem As a Use Case

Session Led by Driss Ibenmansour, Partner at Breega and Maryam Guessous, Head of Domseeds



The Moroccan Venture Studio and VC Landscape

Despite a number of regulatory challenges, Morocco's venture capital landscape is going through a transformation as this North African nation is fast becoming a tech hub and investment destination for African and global investors interested in investing in top notch Moroccan tech startups.

In addition to this, what makes Morocco an attractive investment destination apart from its strategic location as a gateway between Africa, Europe and the Middle East is that as it positions itself as a deep tech hub with groundbreaking solutions for local, continental and global challenges, its startup ecosystem is rapidly gaining traction, particularly in relation to pre-seed and seed investments.

Furthermore, this small nation's startup ecosystem is being driven by the Moroccan diaspora's support, a competitive high quality talent pool and increasing corporate purchases from Moroccan startups which triggers the ecosystem. In spite of concerns about deal quality and market saturation, funding is on the rise via Morocco's sovereign fund, Matisse which is injecting vast sums of capital into the country's venture capital ecosystem. Playing to its ecosystem strengths, Morocco's thriving startup ecosystem is aided by **growing corporate involvement; sovereign fund support; university initiatives** including how UM6P has established substantial programs including incubation, venture funding and technical resources; **diaspora potential** as Moroccans abroad represent a significant, untapped talent pool for ecosystem development and its **geographic position**.



Ecosystem Challenges within the Moroccan Landscape

Morocco's startup, venture studio and venture capital ecosystem have a few challenges to navigate and these include dealing with its **heavily regulated environment** that at times threatens innovation as seen in the fintech sector; the country's **market size limitations** which is insufficient to support significant venture-scale growth; a **management expertise gap** within its talent pool; limited exit options as there are few success stories or IPOs which make it harder for investors to get a clear view of exit paths; and **access to capital**.



Venture Studio Moonshots: Future Visions for Morocco's Ecosystem

Participants recognised a need for a pan-African network of venture studios and to shared their ambitious moonshot visions for how venture studios could evolve across Africa. These moonshots included: **Cross-Border Networks** that nourish connections between venture studios across the continent to facilitate easier market expansion; **knowledge and tool sharing** through common repositories for AI tools, business processes, and technical resources; using a **standardized documentation** system for valuation, investment, and legal structures; develop **corporate synergies** between venture studios and corporates; develop new funding instruments with blended finance tools to meet venture studios' unique needs; establish **dedicated micro-funds** for follow-on capital; encourage secondary market development that builds more sophisticated secondary mechanisms for partial exits; and implement **aligned incentive structures** through models that align studio, founder and investor incentives over the medium term.

Participants also shared there should be a focus on developing Morocco's talent through talent development metrics that include enlisting the assistance of second generation founders who can mentor entrepreneurs; set up management training centres to empower entrepreneurs with management expertise and establish dedicated educational initiatives focused on entrepreneurship.



In addition, a recurring theme kept on coming up, the importance of cross-border expansion for venture studio portfolio companies and several concrete approaches were proposed as follows:

- **Develop Studio-to-Studio Coordination:** Creating direct channels between studios in different markets.
- **Market Entry Support:** Providing soft landing assistance for startups entering new countries.
- **Regional Talent Networks:** Building connections between talent pools across markets.
- **Unified Testing Grounds:** Providing access to technical facilities (like UM6P's resources) across borders.
- **Cross-Border Business Development:** Leveraging studio networks for market entry and client acquisition.

Action Points



KEY ACTION ITEMS

A recommendation to align actions with key organisations:

Action 1: Developing Knowledge Repository & Knowledge Sharing

Lead: M-Studio (Aude Juglard and Cedric Mangaud)

Support: 1 MoreThing Ventures (Yassir El Ismaili El Idrissi), Breega (Driss Ibenmansour), SAIS (Casper Olenhusen), Domseeds (Maryam Guessous)

Timeline: 3 - 6 months

Sub-Actions:

- **Create an open-source repository of tools used by venture studios**
 - Document and share AI tools that improve operational efficiency (content creation, investment memo writing);
 - Compile resources on no-code/low-code platforms that enable rapid prototype development;
 - Develop guidelines for selecting and implementing tools that provide competitive advantages.
- **Develop standardized investment structures**
 - Create templates for venture studio investment documentation (term sheets, shareholder agreements);
 - Define standard approaches to liquidation preferences, conversion terms, and equity structures;
 - Establish guidelines for aligning financial incentives between studios, founders, and investors;
 - Document clarity around IP ownership, especially for technical developments;
 - Develop frameworks for standardized secondary transactions at Series A.
- **Develop corporate venture studio best practices**
 - Create frameworks for effectively positioning corporate venture studios to external investors;
 - Document approaches to managing potential conflicts between corporate interests and startup success;
 - Establish guidelines for rights structures that don't impede future funding or exits;
 - Share best practices for marketing corporate venture studios to overcome negative perceptions.



KEY ACTION ITEMS

- **Share methodologies for technical resource allocation**
 - Create frameworks for prioritizing technical roadmaps across multiple portfolio startups;
 - Document best practices for managing shared technical teams while avoiding bottlenecks;
 - Develop resource allocation models that ensure equitable distribution while maximizing impact.
- **Document founder selection and management practices**
 - Establish assessment methodologies for identifying founders who can execute pre-validated ideas;
 - Create frameworks for managing founder transitions while maintaining project continuity;
 - Develop conflict resolution protocols for addressing common founder relationship challenges;
 - Share approaches to incentive alignment for founders, particularly around equity and compensation.
- **Compile industry-specific knowledge bases**
 - Document sector-specific challenges and opportunities in key verticals (agtech, fintech, etc.);
 - Provide resources for adapting successful business models across different African markets;
 - Create reference materials on domain expertise requirements for specialized industries;
 - Document approaches to "copycat" strategy adaptation from other markets.
- **Share financial modeling and revenue generation frameworks**
 - Develop guidelines for early profitability models particularly suited to African markets;
 - Create frameworks for customer-funded growth strategies as alternatives to pure VC models;
 - Document approaches to balancing scalability with sustainable economics.

Action Points



KEY ACTION ITEMS

- Share target return models and investment ratios (e.g., 6-7x return on capital deployed);
- Document various service valuation approaches for non-cash contributions to startups;
- **Create legal and jurisdictional resources**
 - Develop comparative analysis of incorporation jurisdictions;
 - Create templates for standardized investment instruments adapted to local contexts;
 - Document alternatives to SAFE notes in markets where they aren't viable;
 - Share approaches to equity structuring in different African legal environments.

Action 2: Mapping of Venture Studios (VS) in Africa & Setup VS Community

Lead: ENRICH in Africa Center (Tendai Pasipamire) and Digital Africa (Gregoire de Padirac)

Support:

- Advocacy to VC: Ring Capital (Elisabeth Moreno);
- Advocacy to DFI: SAIS (Casper Olenhusen);
- State of Venture Studio in Africa Report: TBC;
- Storytelling, podcast and video: 1 MoreThing Ventures (Yassir El Ismaili El Idrissi).

Timeline: 3 - 6 months

• **Sub-Actions:**

- **Create a "State of Venture Studios in Africa" report**
 - Compile performance metrics and success rates compared to traditional startup paths
 - Develop a concise one-pager with key statistics for executive stakeholders
 - Document the evolution and current state of venture studios across African markets;
 - Analyze how venture studios address ecosystem gaps.



KEY ACTION ITEMS

- like managerial talent development;
- Include comparative analysis of venture studio returns versus traditional VC models.
- **Establish a Community of Practice with quarterly meetings**
 - Schedule and facilitate quarterly knowledge exchange calls with concrete agendas;
 - Create mechanisms for sharing challenges, successes, and evolving methodologies;
 - Develop a governance structure that ensures equal participation and value for all members;
 - Establish protocols for inter-venture studio founder referrals when appropriate.
- **Develop cross-border collaboration frameworks**
 - Create a "soft landing" system protocol for startups expanding to new African markets;
 - Establish standard operating procedures for inter-studio startup referrals and support;
 - Define resource-sharing agreements that enable cross-border collaboration;
 - Document regulatory and compliance requirements across different African markets.
- **Create corporate and academic partnership registries**
 - Compile a database of corporate partners by sector and geography for potential first customers;
 - Document academic institution partnerships that can commercialize promising research;
 - Create protocols for corporate innovation partnerships and first customer relationships;
 - Map potential acquirers by sector and geography to facilitate exit planning.
- **Develop venture studio and founder matchmaking frameworks**
 - Create systems for connecting venture studios and founders across markets for potential consolidation;
 - Establish protocols for "arranged marriages" between complementary startups;
 - Document best practices for facilitating startup mergers and acquisitions.

Action Points



KEY ACTION ITEMS

Action 3: Evangelism & Awareness of VS Community & Activities

Lead: AfricArena (Christophe Viarnaud)

Support: SAIS (Casper Olenhusen)

Timeline: 3 - 6 months

Sub-Actions:

- **Create a comprehensive map of venture studios across Africa**
 - Identify and document all venture studios operating across the continent;
 - Catalog operational details, focus areas, and investment approaches of each studio;
 - Visualize geographic distribution and identify coverage gaps for potential expansion;
 - Distinguish between different venture studio models (corporate-backed, independent, etc.).
- **Advocate for specialized funding instruments**
 - Develop proposals for "blended finance" solutions tailored to venture studio economics;
 - Create frameworks for "loan acting like equity" structures with exit-based repayment mechanisms;
 - Prepare advocacy materials highlighting why traditional VC funding models may not be optimal;
 - Address the concerns about previous failed studio models (like MEST) with clear distinctions;
 - Document micro-fund structures that complement venture studio operations.
- **Produce multi-format educational content**
 - Create podcasts and videos showcasing venture studio successes and methodologies;
 - Develop case studies of successful exits, including global examples with African relevance;
 - Produce comparative analyses of venture studio economics versus traditional VC models;
 - Document the importance of early revenue and profitability in the African context;
 - Create content addressing generational transitions in family businesses as exit opportunities.

Action Points



KEY ACTION ITEMS

- **Engage diaspora networks**
 - Develop targeted outreach strategies for diaspora talent and capital;
 - Create materials highlighting how venture studios reduce barriers to entry for diaspora entrepreneurs;
 - Document success stories of diaspora founders working with venture studios;
 - Address misconceptions about African markets that deter diaspora engagement.
- **Organize a dedicated Venture Studio Summit**
 - Plan an event bringing together GPs, LPs, and venture studios to elevate industry visibility;
 - Develop a program showcasing performance data and successful exits;
 - Create specialized tracks addressing different models, including corporate venture studios;
 - Include sessions on overcoming regulatory challenges in different African markets;
 - Facilitate connections between venture studios and potential corporate acquirers.
- **Note:** All action item leaders to set up the date of first meetings for their respective working groups during the Unconference.

Thank You



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