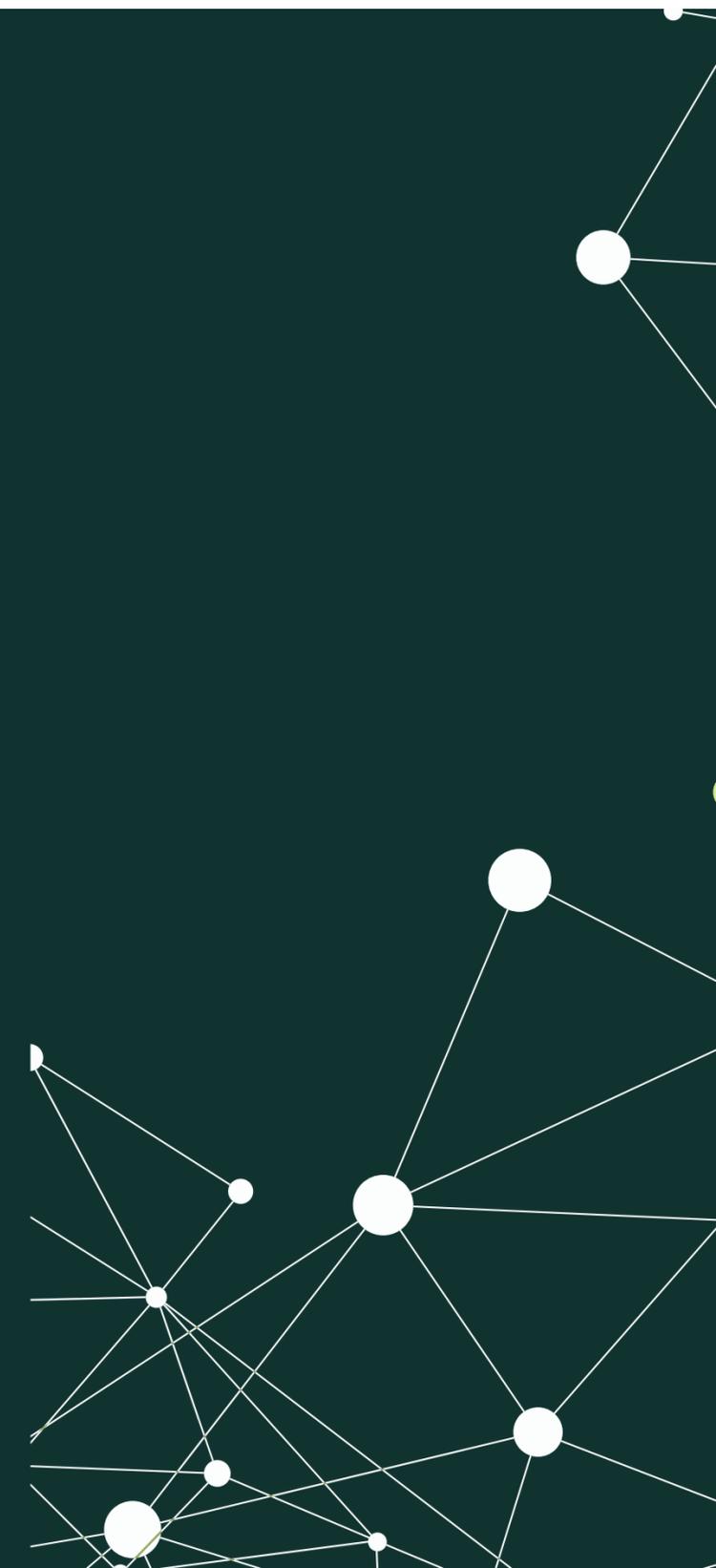


REPORT BRIEF

MILANGO EXPANSION PLAYBOOK

Insights from the Tanzania–Kenya
Market Immersion Program

March 2025



March 2025

Milango as a Catalyst for Regional Expansion To Pioneer Scalable Market Entry for African Startups

Completed by:

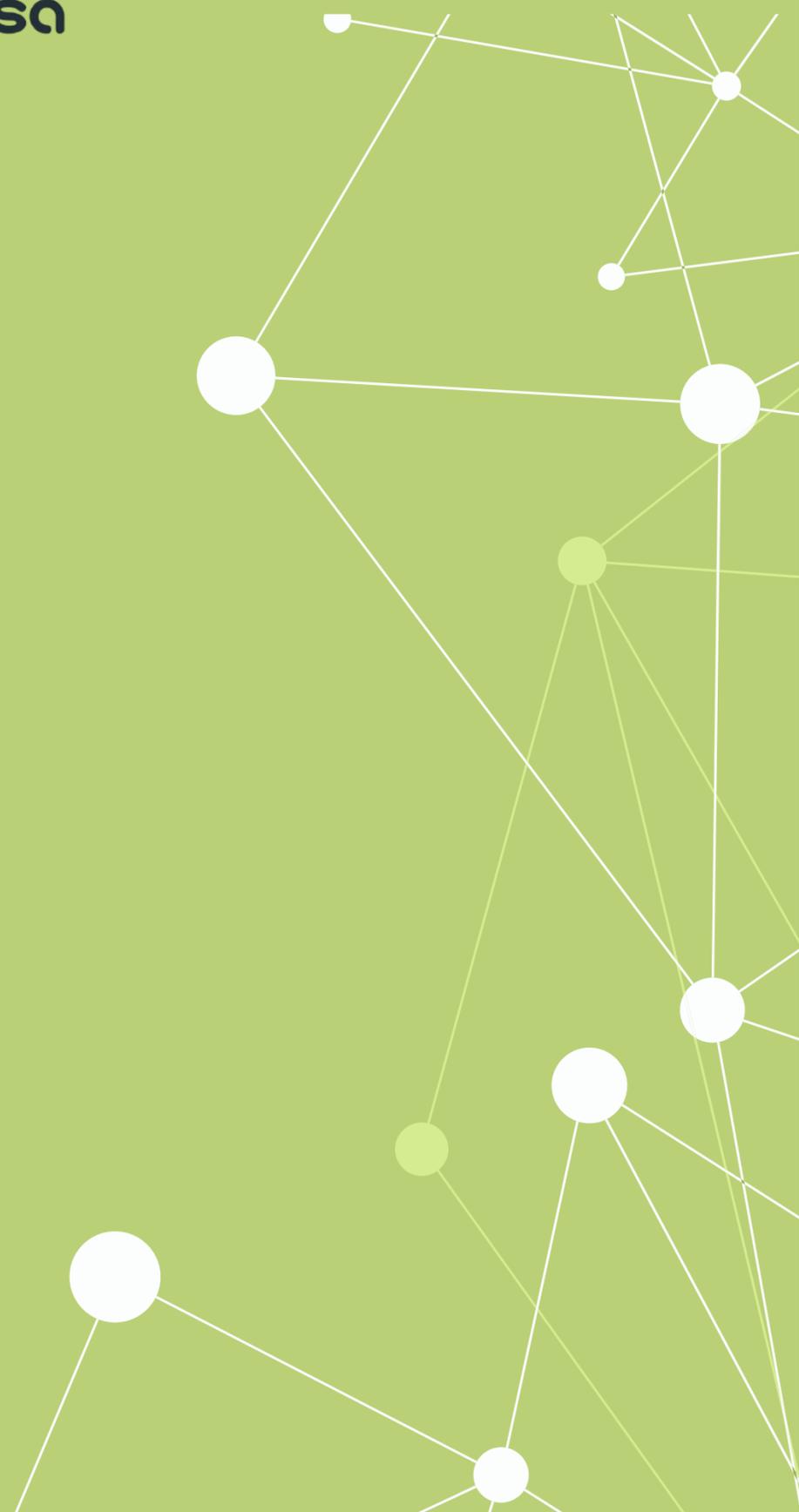
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Milango Expansion Playbook



Report
Milango Expansion
Playbook v1.1

Prepared
Ansa Africa, Nairobi
Kenya

March 2025

Why This Report Matters



- The Milango Expansion Immersion brought together 5 high-potential Tanzanian startups for a week-long structured market entry program in Nairobi.
- The objective was to test Kenya as a strategic expansion market and identify the frameworks, partnerships, and insights required for cross-border growth.
- Over 21 ecosystem partners were engaged, spanning FMCG, EdTech, AgriTech, retail, investment, and trade sectors.
- The report distills a scalable expansion playbook based on real startup experiences, lessons learned, and successful pilot strategies.
- It offers practical guidance, market data, and tools to support future startup expansions within East Africa and beyond.







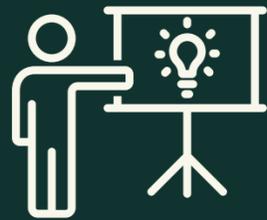
Partner visits with distributors, cooperatives, schools, and logistics providers



Regulatory and legal briefings



Market walkthroughs and ecosystem networking



Pitch and connection event with 40+ Kenyan stakeholders

About the Milango Immersion Week

The Milango Immersion Week, held in March 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya, was a five-day strategic market expansion experience jointly hosted by Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha and Ansa Africa. The program brought together five high-potential startups from Tanzania, each operating in sectors that have demonstrated strong regional growth potential (EdTech, AgriTech, FMCG, Commodities, and Skincare).

The objective of the immersion was to prepare these ventures for successful entry into the Kenyan market by exposing them to key ecosystem players, regulatory processes, and consumer dynamics. Over the course of the week, the startups engaged in curated sector-specific field visits, business development strategy sessions, and investor-readiness workshops facilitated by Ansa Africa.

The week culminated in a high-impact ecosystem showcase attended by Kenyan investors, retailers, cooperatives, and ecosystem enablers—giving startups a real-time platform to pitch, receive feedback, and initiate cross-border partnerships.

Startup Profiles



ShuleSoft EdTech

A comprehensive school management system that digitizes operations for learning institutions. ShuleSoft simplifies fee collection, attendance tracking, academic reporting, and parent-teacher communication.

During the program, the startup explored integration with Kenya's education system and mobile payment infrastructure.

Kilimo Bando AgriTech

A digital platform connecting smallholder farmers to input suppliers, agronomic advisory, and cooperatives. Kilimo Bando aims to modernize agriculture by leveraging data and mobile platforms to streamline farm support services.

In Kenya, the team focused on aligning with local co-operatives and county agricultural offices for pilot testing.

Ojanna Foods FMCG / Nutrition

Specializes in affordable, ready-to-eat pre-cooked beans and legumes tailored for institutional feeding programs and disaster response. Ojanna Foods is tackling nutritional security at scale.

In Nairobi, the team explored partnerships with NGOs, school feeding initiatives, and national supermarket chains.

Chimi Group Commodities & Trade

A B2B-focused trading company that connects Tanzanian cereal and grain producers to institutional buyers. Chimi Group leverages direct sourcing to eliminate middlemen and improve supply chain efficiency.

The team's Kenyan engagements targeted food processors, grain wholesalers, and logistics partners.

Nana Naturals Skincare / Beauty

An organic skincare brand offering ethically produced African beauty products. Nana Naturals uses plant-based ingredients and culturally rooted formulas to serve the conscious consumer.

In Kenya, the startup explored co-branding opportunities and retail placement in organic beauty outlets.



Objectives of the Immersion Week in Nairobi, Kenya

The Milango Immersion Week was designed as a high-impact, market-entry experience for Tanzanian startups ready to explore regional expansion opportunities. Set in Nairobi, Kenya – East Africa's leading innovation hub. The week-long program aimed to deliver strategic value through hands-on learning, partnership building, and ecosystem immersion

Market Familiarization

To help startups understand the Kenyan market landscape, consumer behavior, regulatory frameworks, and sector-specific dynamics.

Partner & Investor Engagement

To facilitate direct meetings with relevant stakeholders – including potential distribution partners, retail chains, cooperatives, accelerators, and ecosystem enablers.

Regulatory & Operational Insights

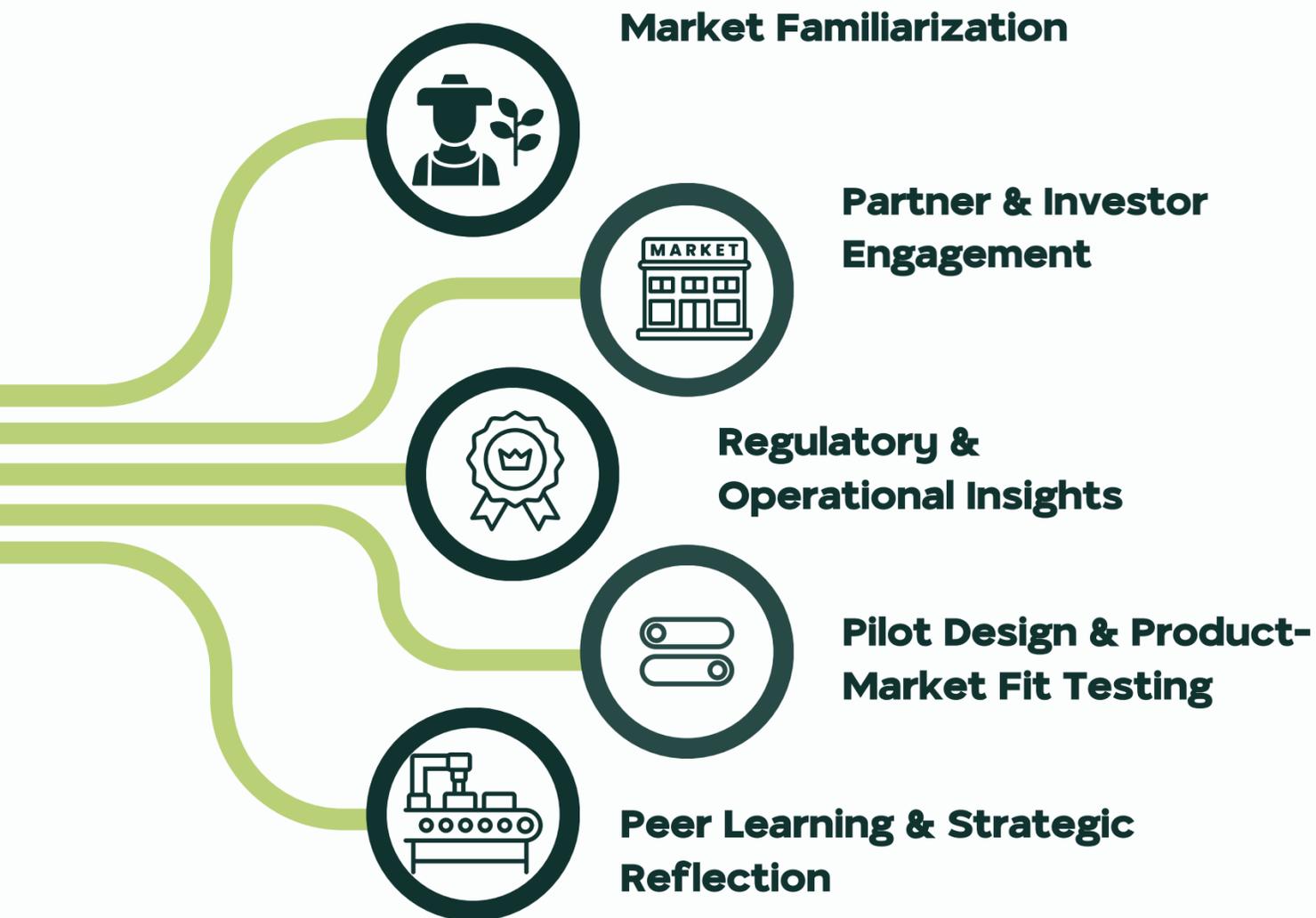
To expose startups to compliance requirements, taxation systems, and business registration pathways through expert-led sessions and peer-sharing.

Pilot Design & Product-Market Fit Testing

To encourage startups to begin shaping and testing pilot partnerships with local institutions, retailers, and cooperatives.

Peer Learning & Strategic Reflection

To create a space for the five participating startups to share experiences, receive mentorship, and reflect on regional scale-up strategies with guidance from Ansa Africa and Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha.



Milango Immersion Week at a Glance

5 High-Potential Sectors engaged

01

EdTech

02

AgriTech

03

FMCG

04

Commodities & Trade

05

Skincare & Wellness

Pilots

ShuleSoft with Nairobi-based private schools
Kilimo Bando with agri-cooperatives and county officers

2 Startups Pilots

5+

5+ Ecosystem Enablers Engaged

3

3 Legal/Policy Briefings Attended

Engagement Highlights

21+ Strategic Partner Meetings held across Nairobi

21+

11 New Partnership Leads identified

11

4.2 Meetings per Startup (Average) with targeted stakeholders

4.2

3 Confirmed Follow-Up Conversations with buyers/distributors

3

Milango Immersion Week at a Glance

East Africa's startup ecosystem is experiencing exponential growth, with a strong increase in investment, digital transformation, and policy-driven support for entrepreneurs.

Despite a global economic downturn in 2023, African startups collectively raised over \$2 billion, with Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt, and South Africa attracting the highest levels of venture capital (Africa: The Big Deal, 2023).

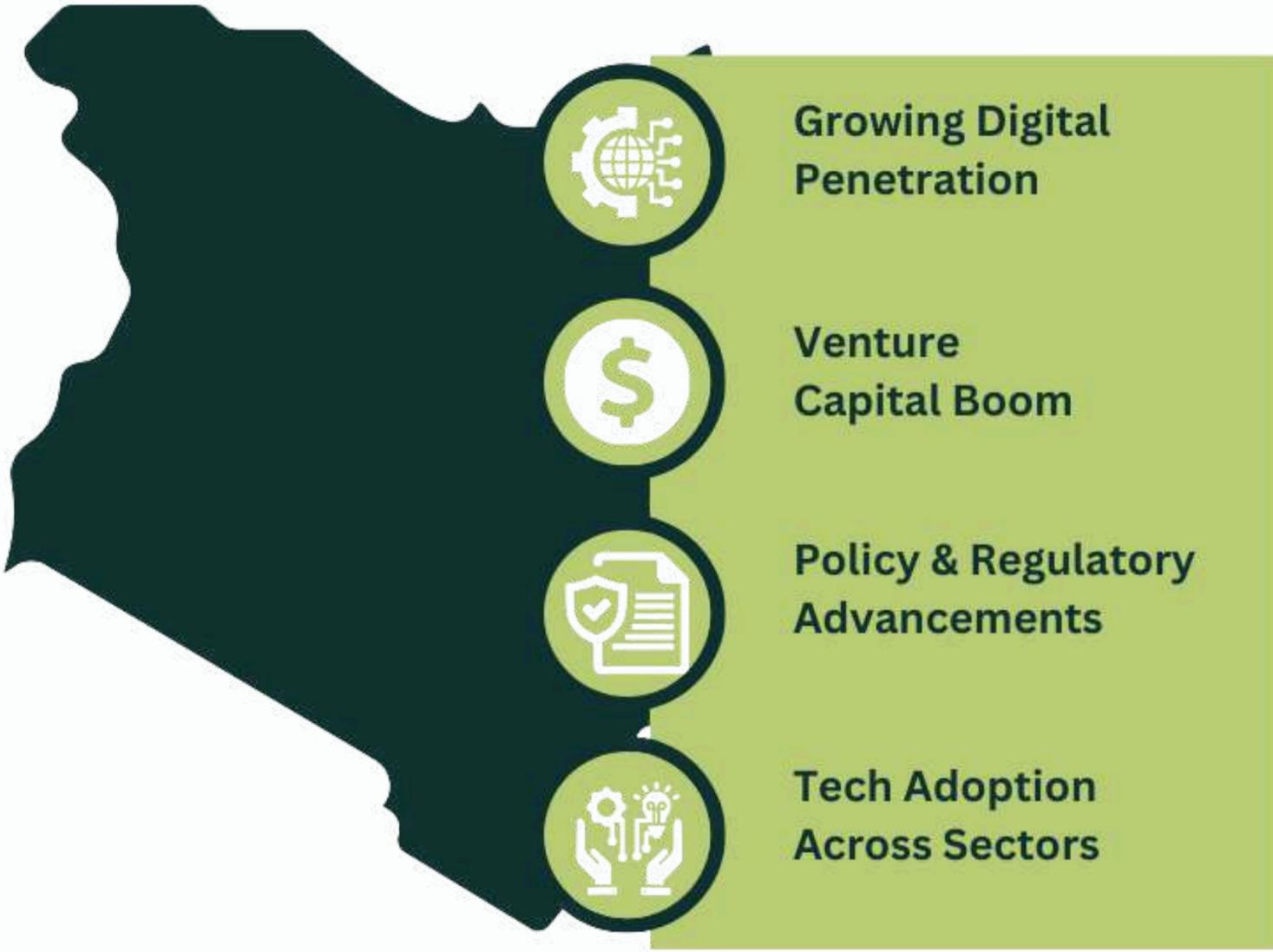
Notably, Kenya secured \$522 million in startup investments across 84 deals in 2023, surpassing Egypt to become the second-largest recipient of venture capital in Africa (Partech, 2023).

Key factors driving East Africa's startup ecosystem

<p>80% of East Africa's population has mobile access, and smartphone adoption is expected to reach 65% by 2025 (GSMA, 2023).</p>	<p>Fintech dominates investments, accounting for 60% of startup funding, followed by e-commerce, health tech, and AgriTech (Briter Bridges, 2023).</p>	<p>The East African Community (EAC) is improving trade integration, startup policies, and investment incentives, easing cross-border expansion.</p>	<p>Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania are adopting fintech, mobile money, e-commerce, and AgriTech solutions at an accelerating pace (World Bank, 2023).</p>
80%	60%	EAC	Adoption



Key factors driving East Africa's startup ecosystem growth



Milango as a Catalyst for Regional Expansion

The case for The Tanzania - Kenya investment opportunity



The Kenya-Tanzania trade corridor is among the most active economic relationships in East Africa, contributing to \$785 million in bilateral trade in 2023 (EAC Trade Report, 2023).

Tanzania's exports to Kenya rose from \$250 million in 2018 to \$334 million in 2023, while Kenya's exports to Tanzania reached \$451 million in the same period (COMTRADE, 2023)

Critical Partner

Tanzania is Kenya's largest African supplier of food commodities (EABC, 2023).

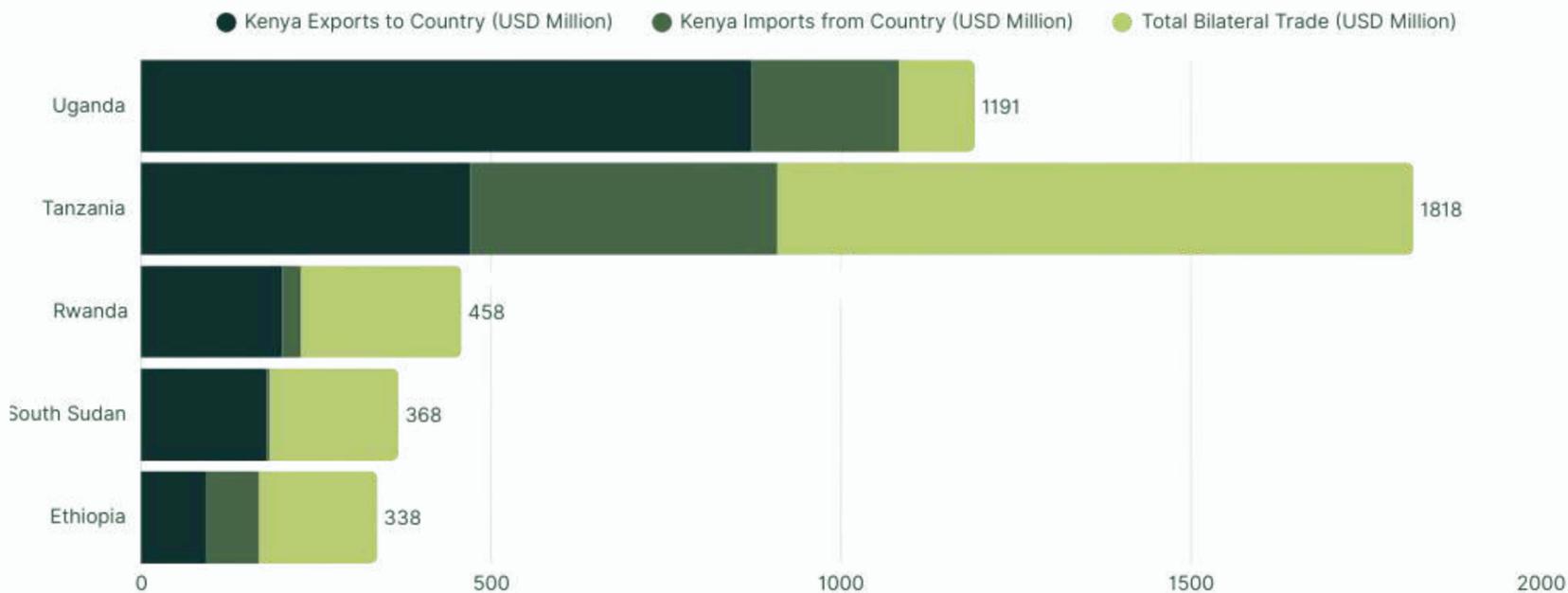
Kenya Exports

Kenya exports processed foods, pharmaceuticals, and industrial goods to Tanzania, amounting to \$89 million in trade (EAC Secretariat, 2023).

Fintech entry

Kenyan banks and fintech firms (e.g., Equity Bank, Safaricom, and NCBA Group) are expanding into Tanzania, boosting investment and cross-border digital transactions (KenInvest, 2023).

Kenya's Bilateral Trade With EAC Countries



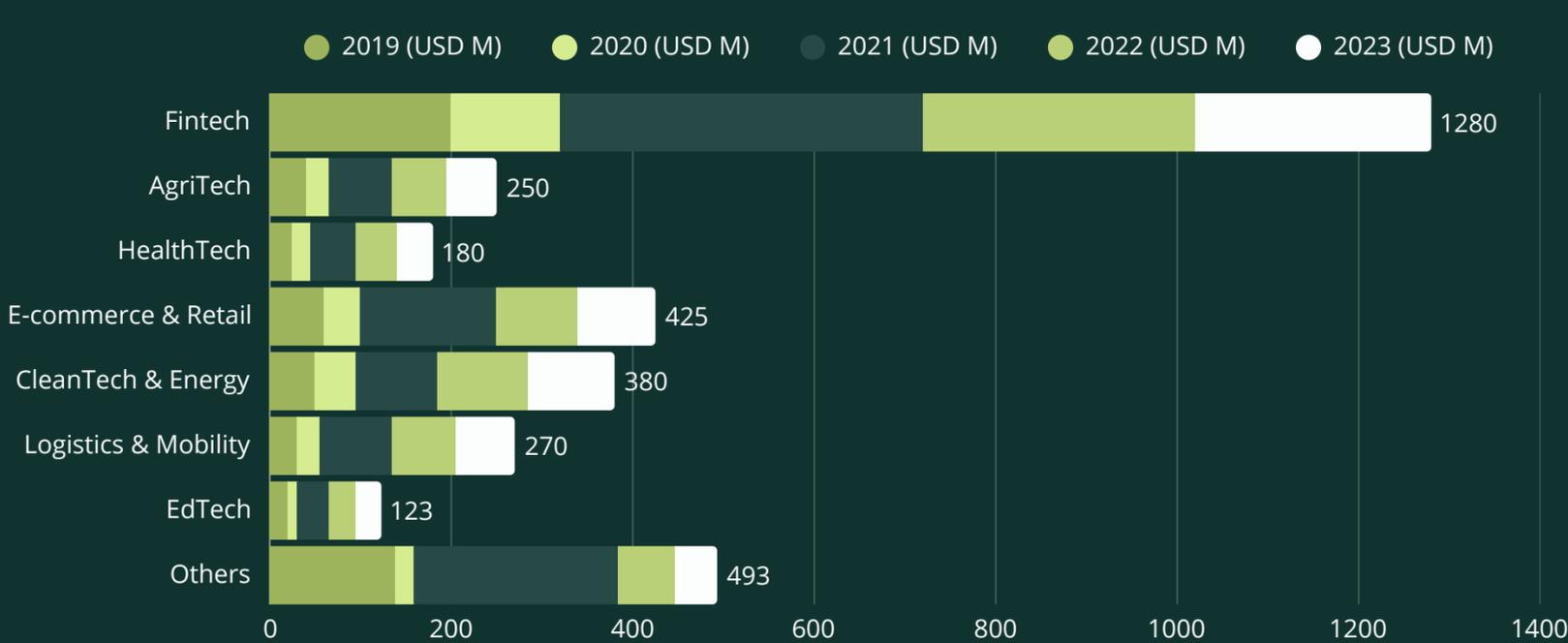
Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), Economic Survey 2023, TradeMark East Africa, Kenya Trade Report 2023.

Kenya leads the way in innovation + funding flows

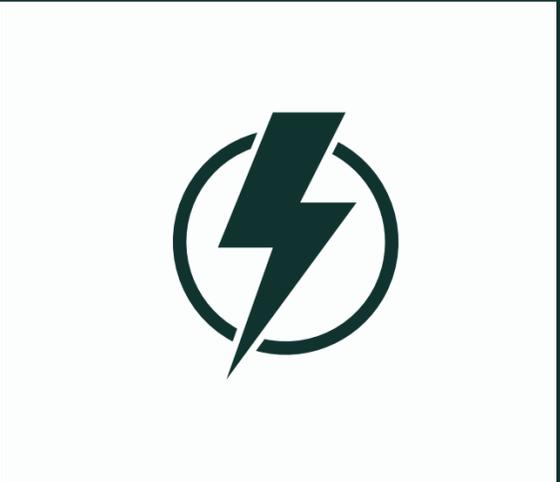
Kenya has maintained its position as a leading innovation and investment hub in Africa, with significant startup capital flowing into key sectors over the years.

The majority of funding has consistently gone to fintech, reflecting investor confidence in Kenya's mature mobile money ecosystem and the country's role as a financial inclusion pioneer. Other high-performing sectors include AgriTech, which benefits from Kenya's large agricultural base and growing interest in climate-smart solutions, and logistics and mobility, driven by demand for last-mile delivery and transport innovations. HealthTech and EdTech have seen moderate yet steady investment, especially post-COVID, as digital solutions in healthcare and education gain ground.

Kenya Startup Sectoral Funding (2019-2023)



Milango as a Catalyst for Regional Expansion



Africa: The Big Deal:Startup funding dashboards and East Africa insights, Disrupt Africa: Kenya Startup Ecosystem reports (2020-2023)

Milango Expansion Strategy (A 4-Pillar Market Entry Framework)

The Milango program provided participating startups with a structured approach to entering the Kenyan market. The expansion framework was anchored around four strategic pillars:

Business Registration & Regulatory Compliance

- Startups assessed the most viable entry models—from full incorporation to partnerships and distribution agreements.
- Legal briefings helped clarify sector-specific licensing (e.g., EdTech registration with the Ministry of Education, AgriTech compliance with input regulation).
- Recommendations emphasized lean entry: testing the market through partnerships before full legal incorporation where feasible.

Financial Planning & Capital Access

- Startups were sensitized on Kenya's typical 30–90 day payment cycles, which can create cash flow bottlenecks.
- Emphasis was placed on banking with regional financial institutions (e.g., Stanbic, Equity, Ecobank) to manage working capital across borders.
- Alternative financing options were explored: fintech credit, supplier financing, and regional investor networks.

Strategic Partnerships for Speed

- The fastest path to market traction was through distributor, co-branding, or institutional partnerships.
- Each startup engaged a partnership analyzer tool to assess mutual value and long-term sustainability.
- Partners provided access to customer bases, distribution networks, payment rails, and local trust.

Pilot Testing & Market Fit

- Pilots were prioritized over immediate scaling—used to gather feedback, refine offerings, and test pricing strategies.
- Pilots with schools (ShuleSoft) and cooperatives (Kilimo Bando) demonstrated how proof-of-concept builds traction and trust.
- Startups were encouraged to treat Kenya as a learning lab for future regional growth.

Venture Snapshots from the Field



Venture	Engagements	Next Step
Kilimo Bando (AgriTech)	Met with 6 stakeholders—county agriculture offices, cooperatives, agri-input dealers.	Exploring a pilot with Nairobi-based cooperatives to digitize extension services.
ShuleSoft (EdTech)	Engaged with 4 private schools, 1 digital payments provider, and an EdTech accelerator.	Drafting a 3-month pilot in Nairobi schools and integrating M-Pesa for school fee payments.
Nana Naturals (Skincare/FMCG)	Met with 4 retailers, including Healthy U and Goodlife Pharmacy.	Negotiating retail partnerships and expanding influencer-based e-commerce strategy.
Chimi Group (Commodities & B2B Trade)	Met with 5 institutional buyers—grain millers, food processors, and logistics firms.	Formalizing sourcing partnerships and exploring Kenya-based warehouse operations.
Ojanna Foods (Pre-cooked Foods & Nutrition)	Visited 3 institutional buyers and 2 supermarket chains.	Exploring opportunities in school feeding programs and emergency food contracts.

Venture Snapshots from the Field

The Milango Expansion Immersion Week delivered tangible outcomes across partnerships, market learning, and early-stage validation. The program created measurable value for each participating startup and helped catalyze their Kenya entry strategy.

01 Partnerships & Ecosystem Engagement

- 21+ B2B & ecosystem meetings held with Kenyan partners.
- 11 new partnership leads identified across retail, logistics, education, fintech, and agriculture.
- 3 follow-up meetings already scheduled post-immersion

02 Market Insights & Sector Exposure

- Startups gained firsthand exposure to 5 core sectors in Kenya: EdTech, AgriTech, FMCG, Skincare, and Commodities.
- Insights gathered from supermarket chains, government offices, tech accelerators, and trade associations.

03 Product Validation & Pilots

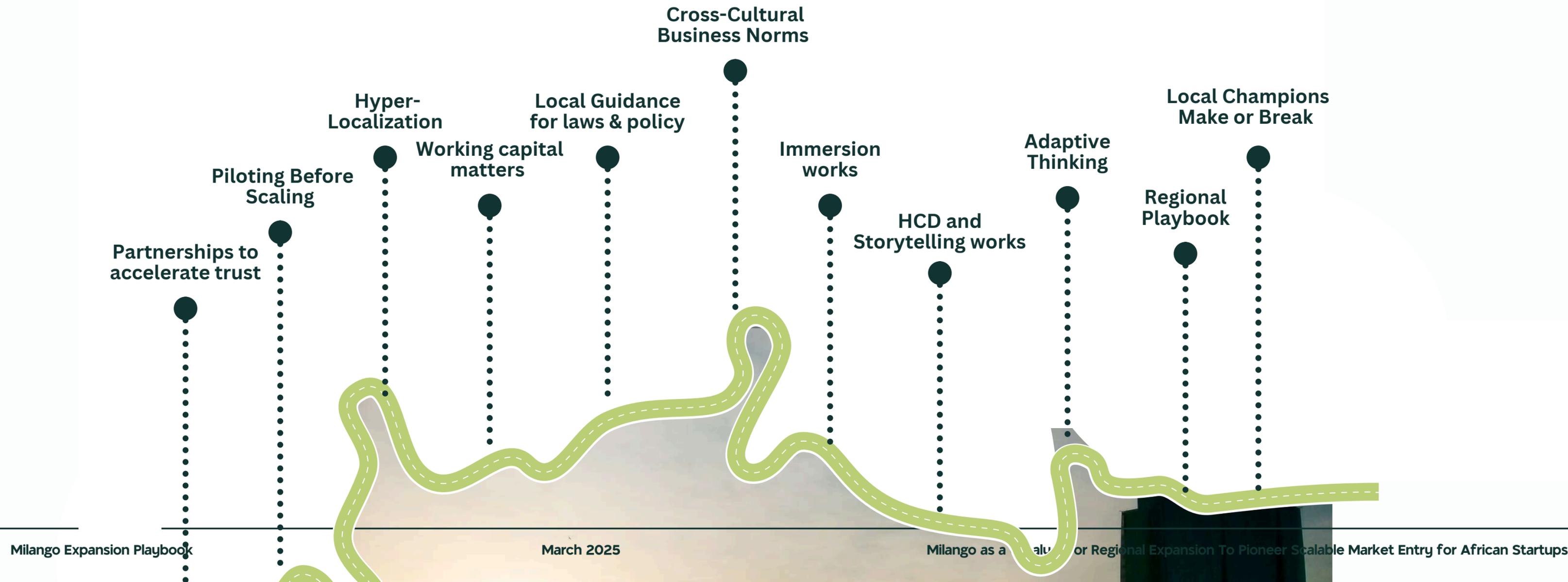
- 2 ventures (Kilimo Bando & ShuleSoft) are now exploring local pilot programs with cooperatives and schools.
- Startups collected real-time feedback on pricing models, payment systems, and user expectations.

04 Strategic Navigation of Regulatory Landscape

- Ventures attended 3 briefings with legal experts and regulatory stakeholders.
- Startups better understood tax, licensing, and compliance requirements for their respective sectors.

What Expansion Demands in East Africa (Lessons learnt) (1/2)

The Milango project served as a live testbed for understanding the real-world barriers and enablers of regional startup expansion, offering rich insights into what it takes for Tanzanian startups to successfully land and grow in the Kenyan market. These lessons not only inform future iterations of the program but also offer a practical playbook for other ventures looking to scale across East Africa.



What Expansion Demands in East Africa (Lessons learnt) (2/2)

Expansion, as the program demonstrated, is not simply about crossing a geographical line; it's about adapting mindsets, recalibrating business models, and embedding into new consumer and regulatory environments. Each participating venture—from AgriTech to EdTech and FMCG—had to navigate different levels of complexity depending on sector-specific regulations, consumer behaviors, and logistical considerations. These lived experiences formed a powerful learning lab on what works and what doesn't when scaling a startup across borders.

In essence, the Milango experience has proven that successful regional growth is possible when startups are equipped with the right tools, supported by the right networks, and willing to localize both their products and their approach.



Product Fit Must Be Localized

- Startups cannot assume a "copy-paste" of their home model will work.
- Tailoring for local curricula (ShuleSoft) or agricultural systems (Kilimo Bando) was key to relevance.



Partnerships Are the Fastest Entry Point

- Engaging distributors, cooperatives, and ecosystem enablers unlocks faster scale.
- Strategic partnerships helped Nana Naturals and Chimi Group build trust and navigate the market without upfront infrastructure costs.



Working Capital Constraints Are Real

- Kenya's long receivables cycle (30–90 days) can destabilize cash flow.
- Ventures must plan for this with strong financial models and regional banking partners.



Piloting Before Registering Saves Time & Cost

- Pre-registration pilots allowed ventures to test assumptions with minimal risk.
- This lean approach gave Ojanna Foods and others the ability to refine distribution and pricing strategies before committing.



Regulatory Navigation Requires Early Planning

- Each sector has different requirements—education, food, and fintech especially.
- Sessions with policy stakeholders helped demystify licensing and compliance pathways.

Milango Expansion Playbook

Tools for Entrepreneurs

Milango introduced and tested several practical tools and frameworks to support startup expansion, developed in direct response to the challenges faced by early-stage ventures entering new markets. These tools were not only used during the immersion week but were also refined through real-time interactions with the ecosystem, partners, and prospective clients.

As a result, they are grounded in the realities of cross-border entrepreneurship in East Africa. Each framework offers actionable guidance on key areas such as partnership development, regulatory compliance, capital readiness, and product-market fit. Together, these tools form a practical playbook that any entrepreneur can adapt and apply when looking to scale into Kenya or the broader region. They are especially valuable for founders who need to move quickly, make smart decisions with limited resources, and build credibility in unfamiliar markets.

01

Market Entry Canvas

- A simple framework for defining the expansion hypothesis, target customer segments, and channels.
- Helps startups prioritize entry strategies based on demand, product readiness, and operational ease.

02

Partnership Matrix Analyzer

- A decision-making tool to assess potential partners based on mutual benefit, reach, credibility, and resource input.
- Encourages startups to move beyond opportunistic partnerships toward strategic alliances.

03

Pilot Program Design Template

- Guides startups to structure short-term pilots for product-market fit testing.
- Includes milestones for iteration, feedback collection, and impact tracking.

04

Working Capital Readiness Checklist

- Designed to prepare founders for Kenya's 30–90 day payment cycles.
- Includes tips on regional banking, invoice financing, and negotiating flexible payment terms.

05

Regulatory Fit Tracker

- A tool to map sector-specific compliance needs for registration, tax, and operations.
- Helps avoid legal bottlenecks during the scaling process.

Key takeaway for future Milango initiatives



Start Early, Learn Fast

Partnerships are Acceleration Engines

Localization Wins

Capital is Regional, but Planning is Local

Regulatory Navigation is a Growth Lever



Milango as a Catalyst for Regional Expansion To Pioneer Scalable Market Entry for African Startups