



Innovate UK Global Alliance Africa

Strategic Learning Review
(2019–25)



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Foreword



Since 2019, the Global Alliance Africa (GAA) programme has emerged as a transformative model of international collaboration in innovation. GAA has delivered enduring impact through demand-driven innovation partnerships between the UK and South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria. Central to GAA’s success is its unique positioning within cross-government collaboration. The programme exemplifies how Innovate UK and the FCDO can jointly enable systemic change in complex environments.

“GAA’s longevity and success lie in its ability to generate trust, catalyse tangible outcomes, and maintain a clear line of sight between local need and UK capability.”

By harnessing the UK’s sectoral expertise and fostering equitable partnerships, GAA has demonstrated how innovation collaboration can simultaneously develop local innovation ecosystems in Africa and open new pathways for UK businesses. As a result of this, our programme has been able to bridge national ambitions with global solutions, positioning the UK as a trusted co-creator with its partner governments.

GAA’s longevity and success lie in its ability to generate trust, catalyse tangible outcomes, and maintain a clear line of sight between local need and UK capability. The programme remains a strategic lever for the UK’s broader growth and foreign policy agenda in the region. With continued commitment, its blueprint offers immense potential for deeper global engagement and shared prosperity.

The Strategic Learning Review captures the breadth and depth of GAA’s influence on innovation ecosystems in the UK and Africa. It explores the mechanisms behind the programme’s impact, from piloting market-ready solutions to strengthening innovation ecosystems through localised approaches and cross-border networks. Drawing on real case studies from GAA, it reflects the programme’s commitment to the UK’s international development objective, driving inclusive growth through equitable partnerships.

Dr Nee-Joo Teh
Project Director of GAA

Global Alliance Africa Programme

Accelerating Innovation Through Equitable UK-Africa Partnerships

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01/04



Key takeaways

- **Global Alliance Africa (GAA) was launched in 2019** and is co-funded by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), the latter under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GRRF). GAA aims to strengthen the local innovation ecosystems and build closer partnerships between the UK, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa to unlock inclusive market access and investment.
- **System-wide approach to innovation:** GAA delivers interventions under three pillars:
 - **Local to Global: Place-Based Innovation (PBI) and Open Innovation (OI)** drive localised innovation and business-to-business connections.
 - **Access to Funding:** the **Lead Customer Programme (LCP)** and **Scaling Out for Impact (SOFI)** fund and support pilots in priority sectors.
 - **Connected Innovation: Global Innovation Networks (GINs)** bring together UK and African actors to collaborate on shared challenges.

- **De-risking through pilot funding:** GAA has funded **over £2 million** (over **£1.25 million in UK businesses** alone) to support **60+ innovation pilots**, enabling businesses across the UK and Africa to validate innovation, secure investment, and move from concept to market-ready solutions.
- **Enabling scalability beyond pilots:** GAA facilitates **equitable UK-Africa partnerships** by strategically connecting **SMEs, corporates, funders and institutions**, in order to achieve **innovation adoption** and **socioeconomic impact** across Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. GAA also helps innovators **localise solutions** to regional needs and opportunities, catalysing businesses' capacity for growth following commercialisation.
- **Delivering inclusive outcomes:** GAA has facilitated **320 collaborative ventures**, including **206 UK-Africa partnerships**, resulting in new products, job creation, and investment. Since 2019, GAA has engaged over **2,700 organisations**, **66% of which are SMEs**, **30% of which are women-led**, and **20% of which are youth-led**.

- **Advancing sustainability through innovation:** GAA has committed over **£800k** through the LCP for pilots in sectors like water, clean energy and alternative proteins, which has helped prove the commercial case for sustainable innovation solutions.
- **Lessons For Enabling Innovation Commercialisation and Growth:** GAA's success has highlighted a few key lessons:
 - **De-risking innovation through real-world pilots** is essential to move ideas from concept to market.
 - **Strategic industry partnerships** and **local ownership** ensure solutions meet local needs, catalysing scalability.
 - **Structured support that aligns pilots with market expectations** is vital for innovation to be investment-ready and capable of delivering lasting impact.

Global Alliance Africa: Programme Overview

Launched in 2019, Innovate UK Global Alliance Africa (GAA) programme is an UK International Development initiative aiming to build stronger, equitable UK–Africa innovation partnerships to maximise the creation of inclusive market access, funding and investment opportunities between the UK, Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya.

During the period of this Strategic Learning Review between September 2019 to March 2025, the programme was **co-funded by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT)**, latter under the **Global Challenges Research Fund (GRRF)**.

The **GAA** programme is a core component of the UK Government's **international innovation agenda**. It supports the UK's ambition to be a **global hub for innovation by 2035**, by de-risking innovation, accelerating innovation adoption and commercialisation, and unlocking high-potential bilateral connections with African markets for UK businesses.

Co-funded by the **FCDO** through the Africa Technology and Innovation Partnerships (ATIP) programme, and delivered by **Innovate UK** (see Figure 1), GAA is one of the UK's primary instruments for achieving inclusive, innovation-led market growth in Africa. It operates at the intersection of **UK development and innovation policy**, bridging the innovation mandate of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the development goals of FCDO.

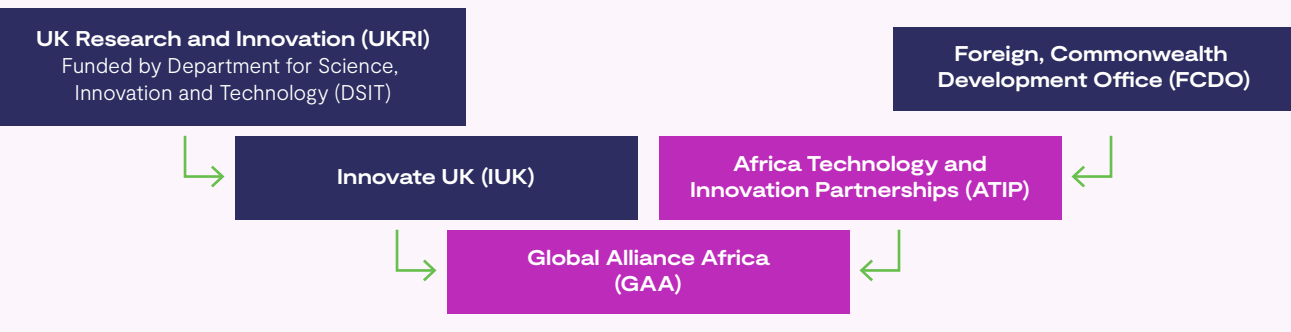
The GAA programme directly contributes to the **UK growth agenda** by:

- Unlocking inclusive economic growth in Africa
- Enabling more UK businesses to scale through global market access, increasing UK engagement and presence in Africa
- Positioning the UK as a trusted innovation partner worldwide
- Building global alliances to address shared current and future socio-economic challenges, including climate change and sustainable natural resource management
- Driving investment into UK research and development

Through targeted interventions and pilot funding, GAA creates investable, scalable innovations that meet local demand, facilitate market entry, and strengthen the UK's position in global innovation value chains.

Figure 1. Contextualising the GAA Programme: Connections Across Programmes and Organisations

Key: ■ Organisation ■ Programme

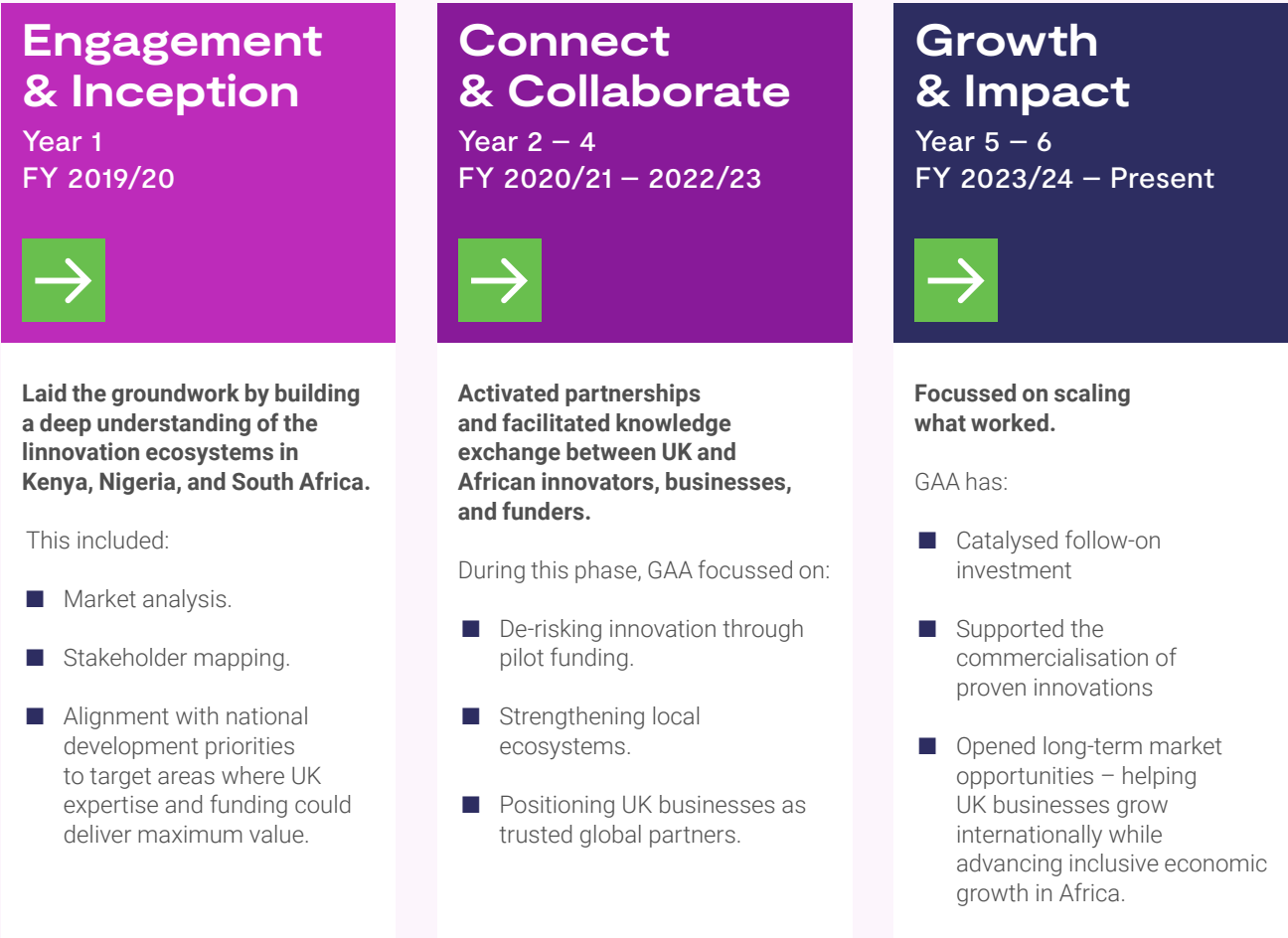


Phased Model for Innovation-Led Market Growth

Since 2019, GAA has followed a structured, **three-phase model** to unlock innovation and market opportunities between the UK and Africa. This phased approach was designed to move from understanding local ecosystems, to building strategic connections, to scaling commercially viable solutions. Figure 2 below outlines this journey, from the foundational work in **Engagement & Inception**, through active collaboration in **Connect & Collaborate**, to delivering tangible outcomes in **Growth & Impact**.

Figure 2. GAA Six-Year Vision

Global Alliance Africa (GAA) Six-Year Vision

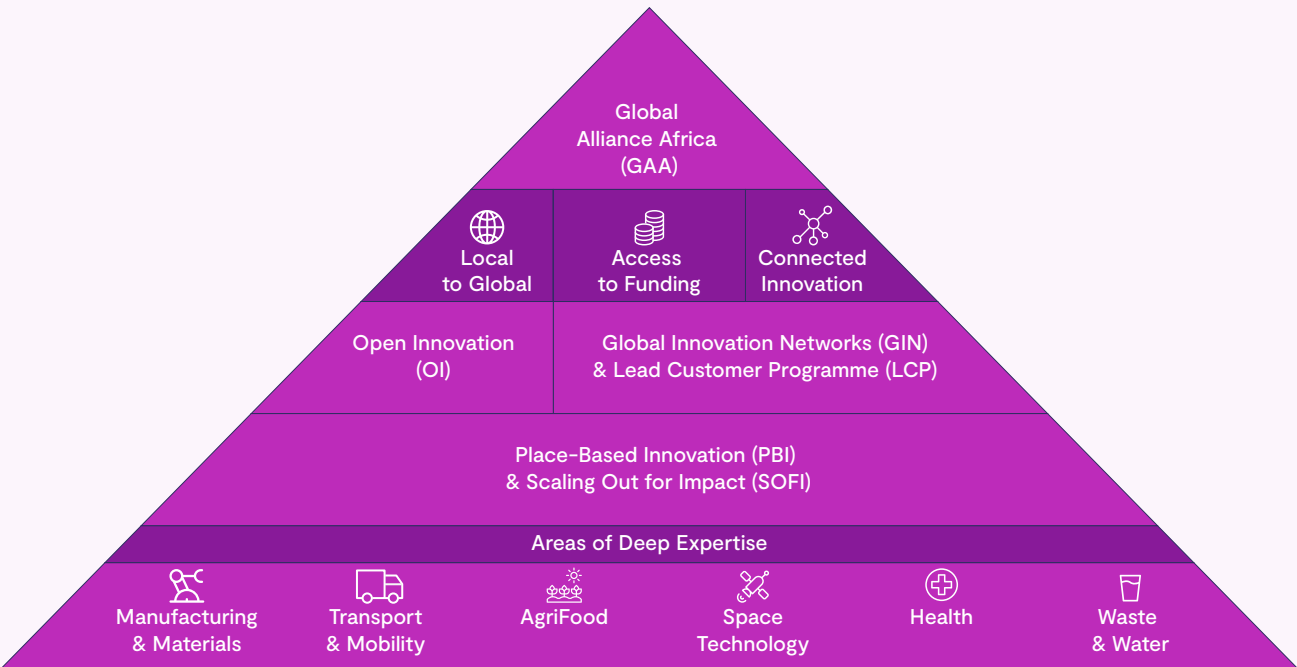


System-Wide Approach to De-Risking Innovation

GAA delivers impact through a **system-wide model** designed to bring together a broad range of key actors from the UK, Africa and globally to strengthen innovation ecosystems and accelerate innovation adoption and commercialisation. Its targeted interventions are built around three core pillars (Figure 3):

- **Local to Global:** Delivered through two key mechanisms, [Place-Based Innovation \(PBI\)](#) and [Open Innovation \(OI\)](#). PBI focuses on building capacity in secondary regions and informal sectors by leveraging UK and pan-African expertise, networks, and resources to support inclusive, innovation-led development. OI drives and funds business-to-business partnerships that help near-market innovations gain traction and strengthen supply chain resilience.
- **Access to Funding:** Focuses on brokering innovation finance and investment. In FY24/25, this has centred on the [Lead Customer Programme \(LCP\)](#), which provides seed funding to businesses in priority sectors identified through the GINs to test and scale their innovations. This pillar also includes [Scaling Out for Impact \(SOFI\)](#), which falls under PBI and provided targeted grant funding to UK–South Africa Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) partnerships to pilot locally relevant innovations for underserved communities or informal sectors.
- **Connected Innovation:** Realised through [Global Innovation Networks \(GIN\)](#) and [Place Based Innovation \(PBI\)](#), this pillar brings together UK, African, and international partners to co-develop solutions, share knowledge, and drive collaboration in high-growth sectors linked to economic and societal impacts.

Figure 3. GAA Pillars



System-Wide Approach to De-Risking Innovation
continued

GAA supports innovation by engaging a diverse set of ecosystem actors across the UK and Africa, each playing a critical role in bringing solutions to market. As shown in Figure 4, this includes **core innovation partners** (such as SMEs and early-stage businesses), **industry-scale players** (including large corporates and multinationals), and **ecosystem catalysts** (such as academics and innovation institutions) - engaged

through practical collaboration, knowledge sharing, and investment-readiness activities.

A key mechanism of this model is **pilot seed funding**, directed to core innovation partners to enable real-world testing, validate market fit, and reduce commercial risk. Investors are more likely to fund innovate products that have been market-tested and proven

to be capable of commercialisation and scale, compared to unproven prototypes, no matter how promising the technology may be. To date, GAA has provided over **£2 million across 60+ pilot projects**, with over **£1.25 million in UK businesses** alone, helping innovators secure further investment, build credibility within their industries, and scale viable solutions.

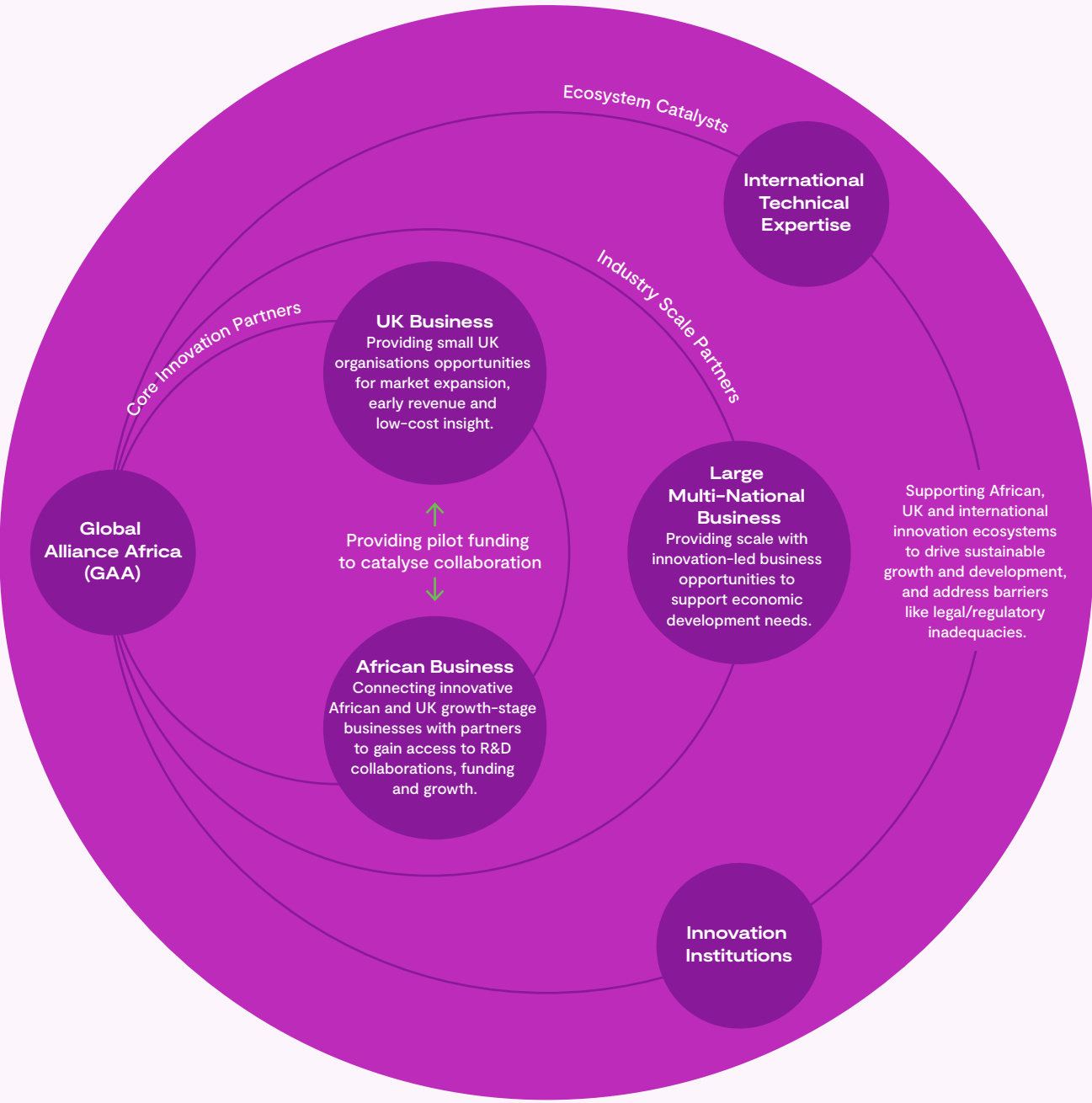
“

If you have companies with a market-ready product, and you have investors who are looking for companies that have been de-risked, with prototyping, market iteration and certification done, etc. then [GAA] could provide a platform for these investors to come and invest in viable high-potential start-ups.”

Joshwa Tambo (AfriFortified), Kenya OI Solution Provider



Figure 4. GAA Spheres of Influence and Impact



Unlocking Market Access Through Innovation Pilots

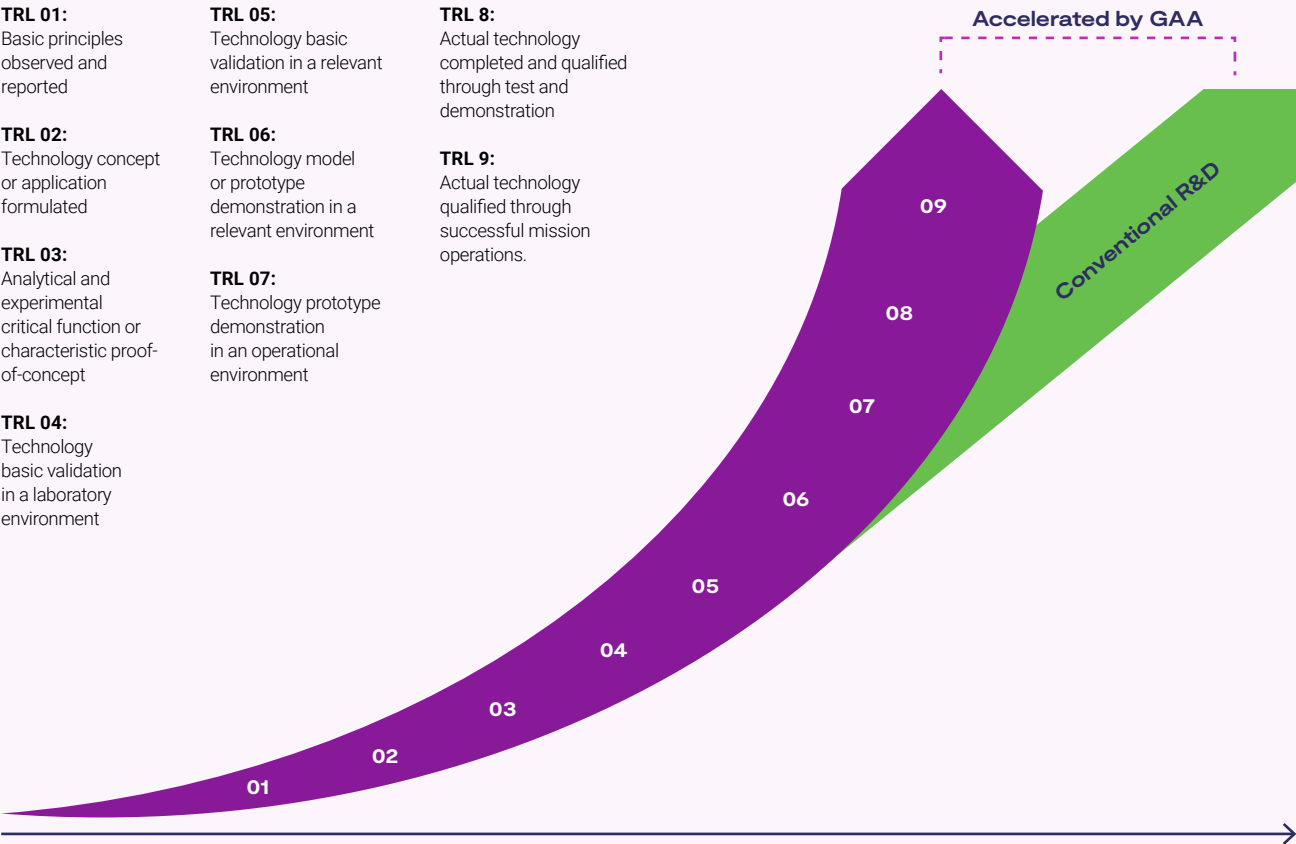
A key role of the GAA programme is to help innovative solutions move from mid-stage development to market readiness by accelerating their progress through key **Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs)** (Figure 5).

GAA targets the critical mid-stage of innovation—**TRL 5 to 7**—where many solutions stall due to a lack of funding and real-world validation. Through seed funding for pilots and support, GAA enables innovators to test their technologies and demonstrate their effectiveness in live settings (TRL 8-9). This process strengthens market alignment, investment readiness, facilitates commercialisation and improves the likelihood of scale.

Through initiatives like the OI intervention and the LCP, GAA helps businesses connect with, industry leaders, key stakeholders and funders to build **sustainable partnerships** and increase their **technical capabilities**. By tapping into GAA's extensive network, technical expertise and regional knowledge, these businesses can more confidently and effectively introduce, test and scale their innovations in Africa, as seen in the case study below.

"I think [GAA] is about unlocking markets. Using our funding to unlock other funding opportunities, rather than a traditional development approach with all the funding just coming from one place."
Janet Geddes, Global Director, Innovate UK

Figure 5. GAA's influence on TRL progress



Case study

Monitor Sustainable Artisanal Mining with AI and Satellite Technology

(Makor, Auyan Ltd, MX4 Foundation and Safe Mining Forum)

Supported by GAA, an equitable, cross-country partnership between Makor Resources (South Africa), Auyan Ltd (UK), MX4 Foundation (Kenya), and Safe Mining Forum (Kenya) was set up to develop and pilot an AI-driven satellite monitoring system to assess the sustainability of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) in Africa.

GAA helped shape, pilot and improve the AI system, which now uses satellite images and machine learning to track environmental impact, biodiversity, and compliance.

The system is already being used by **AMC Consultants** and **Niger's Ministry of Mines**, with plans to **expand the pilot to areas like Rwanda, the DRC, and northern Kenya**.

This case study highlights how GAA enables effective, cross-border partnerships and supports the development of solutions that are both **locally grounded** and **globally relevant**.



Supporting Innovation Commercialisation Beyond Piloting

GAA’s impact goes beyond seed-funding pilots and de-risking projects; its system-wide approach helps innovators **secure the partnerships and capital needed to scale**. By facilitating targeted connections with investors, corporates, and local experts, GAA ensures that promising solutions are not only technically sound, but also **commercially viable** and **market-ready**. This can facilitate significant and wide-scale application of innovative solutions, as seen in the case study below.

GAA supports commercialisation by creating the conditions for **high-value engagement** between innovators, funders, and industry leaders. This includes **targeted networking**, training, and facilitated discussions focused on real market needs.

To strengthen **long-term viability**, GAA also draws on **sector** and **advisory expertise** to guide solutions toward scale and sustainability. For UK businesses entering African markets, access to GAA’s network offers a critical advantage, connecting them with the right partners and investors to turn proven pilots into commercially successful, market-driven solutions.

“[GAA] are opening up opportunities for us to collaborate, not just with UK businesses, but with other international businesses. They are also helping to give us access to knowledge, information, partnerships, collaboration, etc. which will help my sector.”

**Ifebuche Madu (Afrikstabel Textiles),
Nigeria GIN Stakeholder**

Case study

Water Monitoring for Industrial Sustainability

(4T2 Sensors & PCS Global)

Through support from the GAA **Water Lead Customer Programme** (WLCP), UK company 4T2 Sensors partnered with South African firm PCS Global to pilot a real-time water monitoring solution, CIPSense, at a major multinational canning facility owned by Coca-Cola. The system significantly reduced water and energy use, saving up to **40,000 litres per production line**, and enabling additional monthly output worth approximately **£30,000**.

Following the success of the pilot, the technology is now being adopted across all Coca Cola’s facilities in Southern Africa and has sparked **wider commercial interest** from other large water users in the region, including one of the world’s largest brewers. This partnership’s success demonstrates how GAA’s **funding and support for market-testing** based on the **endorsement of lead customers** from industry can facilitate **wide-scale expansion** once solutions are proven effective.



Catalysing Equitable Partnerships

As part of its system-wide model, GAA connects stakeholders across the innovation landscape, including large companies, SMEs, research institutions, and government agencies from Africa, the UK, and beyond. Businesses can often have different ambitions, whether that’s market entry and early growth vs rapid innovation adoption, or expanding into new African markets vs strengthening local innovation ecosystems. GAA sits between the different priorities of businesses of varying size and geographies, and plays a key role in bridging the gaps between them, to catalyse **equitable partnerships**.

“[GAA] is a door or a pathway to relationship across borders. And so far, we’ve had relationship established with three new organisations. GAA provides clarity, which helps diffuse the noise, making the objective of the partnership clear. They help set out what we are planning to achieve together, which makes the handshakes smoother”
Nigeria OI Challenge Holder

As the diagram below indicates (Figure 6) GAA operates at the intersection of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking to achieve **commercialisation** and **scale**, and larger companies aiming to access and bring **emerging technologies to market at pace**. It also connects the interests of UK and other global businesses seeking to **expand into African markets** and African businesses working to **strengthen their innovation ecosystems**.

Large companies often lack capacity to scout and connect with high-potential SMEs, while smaller businesses face barriers in accessing larger corporate networks. In response, GAA plays a **mediating role, facilitating conversations, brokering relationships, and breaking down operational silos** between businesses of different sizes. This helps simplify collaboration across organisations, so they can focus more effectively on innovation.

“[GAA] is not about the UK telling other countries how to set up an innovation ecosystem. Places like Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya have thriving innovation ecosystems already. The emphasis is more on opportunities for UK innovators and businesses to partner with and exchange knowledge and ideas with African innovators and businesses. The coordinating role that GAA has played in building those partnerships and connections has been really valuable.”

Africa Science and Research Team, FCDO

UK-based and other global businesses often seek new markets, global partnerships, and ways to scale innovation in unfamiliar regions. In contrast, African businesses focus on strengthening local ecosystems, creating more resilient supply chains, and solving local challenges sustainably. By facilitating **equitable, cross-border collaborations**, GAA ensures that these differing ambitions can meet in **mutually beneficial** ways, forming **bilateral relationships between UK and African businesses**.

As seen in the case study below, GAA helps businesses develop shared understanding of critical knowledge, align goals and foster a sense of trust and co-creation, through a range of tailored activities.

Figure 6. GAA’s role at the intersection of innovation priorities



Catalysing Equitable Partnerships continued

Case study

Bio-waste to Energy

(Animal Care & Lumos Labs)

Nigeria-Based Lumos Labs-Based piloted an innovative waste-to-energy system that transforms poultry manure into biogas, in response to an [Open Innovation Challenge](#) launched by Innovate UK in partnership with Animal Care Nigeria.

With **£25,000** in seed funding, Lumos Labs developed and installed an on-site biodigester capable of converting **200kg of raw poultry manure into 62.5kWh of electricity per day**, providing a

clean and renewable energy source for the farm. The system also produces organic fertiliser as a by-product and significantly cuts greenhouse gas emissions, by an estimated **11.5 tonnes of CO₂ annually**. The successful pilot has **lowered operational costs** for Animal Care, enhanced sustainability, and laid the groundwork for scaling the solution to other farms in Nigeria and beyond.

This partnership reflects GAA's ability to align **global businesses' innovation efforts** with the **real-world needs** of large local organisations like Animal Care Nigeria, bridging UK-funded innovation frameworks with local sustainability goals.

“The project has not only reduced operational costs and improved waste management practices at Animal Care Nigeria Limited but also contributed to environmental sustainability. With positive outcomes in energy generation, cost savings, and carbon credit accumulation, this project sets a benchmark for future waste-to-energy projects.”

Ejikeme Patrick Nwosu, CEO/MD, Lumos Laboratories Nigeria



Enabling Innovation Through Strategic Localisation

The GAA programme helps businesses adapt their innovation efforts to local African contexts through its PBI initiatives. By connecting them with **local stakeholders** and helping them understand **regional requirements and challenges**, GAA supports businesses in shaping strategies that fit local social and economic realities. This is especially useful for UK and other global businesses new to the complexities of African markets.

“PBI is about understanding the local strengths and economic fabric of the secondary locations that we’re working in and where innovation can help create that incremental socioeconomic impact locally.”
Dr Nee-Joo Teh, Project Director of GAA

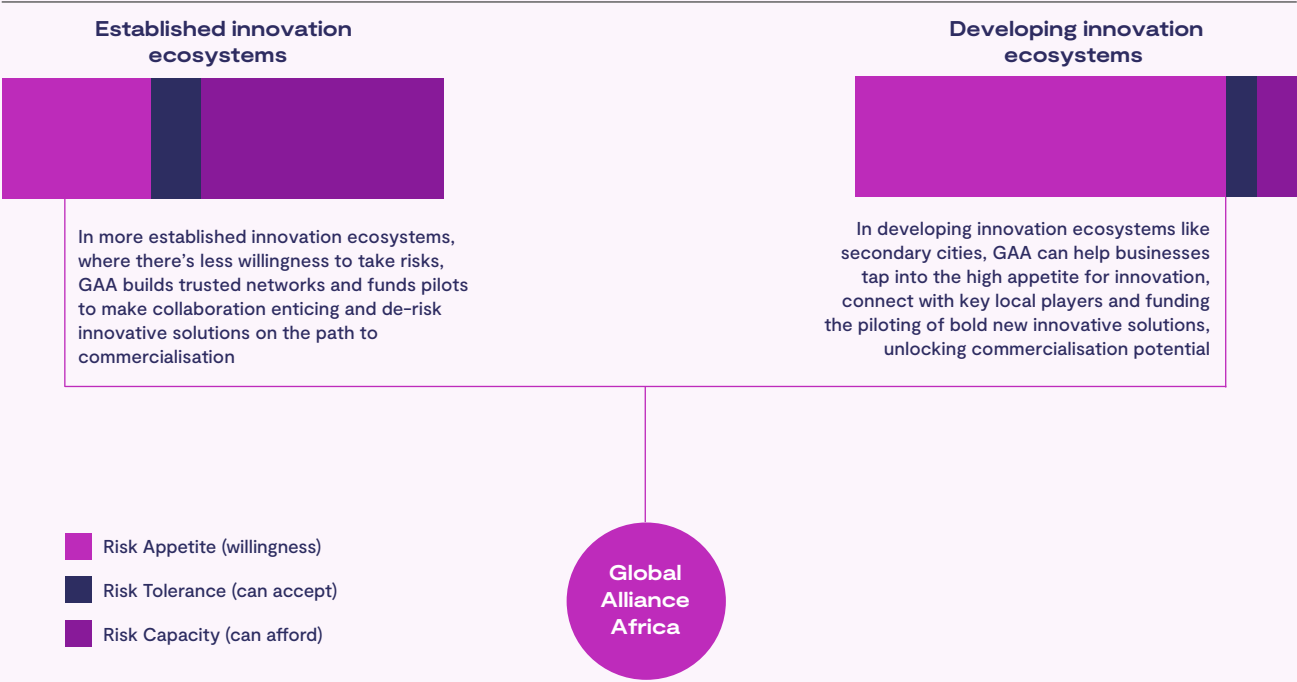
GAA not only helps navigate local challenges, but also supports UK and other global businesses in **finding and entering promising regional markets** to test and grow new innovations. For example, **emerging innovation and economic hubs** in secondary cities in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa offer great but often overlooked opportunities. Emerging hubs are often **eager for new innovative solutions**, even though their capacity to absorb risk may be limited, making them ideal

testing grounds for bold, forward-thinking solutions (Figure 7). GAA acts as a trusted guide, helping UK and other global businesses access these markets, connect with key local players and enable their entry into these high-potential ecosystems.

In more established innovation hubs such as major cities in South Africa, where risk appetite is lower, GAA helps build trust and encourage collaboration between key players. By fostering collaboration and funding pilots, GAA makes it easier for businesses and partners to engage in joint ventures, helping to facilitate the development, adoption and commercialisation of collaboratively developed innovative solutions.

The following PBI case studies illustrate how GAA's locally grounded approach enables innovation to thrive in emerging and established markets, by tailoring support to the specific dynamics of each innovation ecosystem.

Figure 7. GAA's role in leveraging local appetite for risk in innovation



Enabling Innovation Through Strategic Localisation continued

Case study

Ekiti Ecosystem Development

The Ekiti Ecosystem Development project, launched by GAA in 2021, aimed to support innovation in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Working with local stakeholders, GAA helped deliver an innovation audit, an action plan, and formed an innovation advisory group. GAA also co-hosted the [Ekiti Innovation Summit](#), developed an [Innovation Ecosystem Map](#), and published the [Ekiti Investment Guide](#).

As a result, in 2023, Ekiti secured an **USD80 million** investment from the African Development Bank and **USD14.8 million** in state co-funding for the Ekiti Knowledge Zone (EKZ), a planned green tech park projected to generate **26,000 jobs** and **USD14 million income annually**.

By working closely with local government, businesses, and community stakeholders, GAA was able to align its support with regional needs, catalysing meaningful, long-term investment and laying the foundation for sustainable innovation.



Case study

Scaling Out For Impact (SOFI) and the Plasma ReNu project

Scaling Out for Impact Round (SOFI) is a UK–South Africa collaborative innovation programme with cofunding by Innovate UK and South Africa's Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). It supported small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) to co-create affordable, scalable solutions to food, energy, and water challenges. SOFI-2 funded businesses to pilot innovations in underserved areas, especially in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, and Eastern Cape.

SOFI supported **nine collaborative innovation projects** involving **38 SMMEs** (25 South African and 13 UK-based), working on practical solutions like off-grid food and water systems. The Plasma ReNu project is a standout example, where South Africa's NexClean provided local testing and market access, while UK-based Anamad supplied solar-powered water treatment technology using cold plasma. This reflects how SOFI-2 blends local insight with international expertise to tackle real-world challenges.

Through SOFI, GAA has been able to lay the groundwork for long-term impact by equipping underserved communities with the solutions, knowledge, and partnerships needed to drive inclusive economic growth in South Africa.



Case study

Solar Dryer Pilot Project in Eldoret, Kenya

(EnSo Impact & Kaprochunga Farmers Cooperative)



A pilot PBI project in Eldoret, Kenya, saw UK-based EnSo Impact install a solar-powered dryer at the Kaprochunga Farmers Cooperative, who reported **losing up to 50%** of their weekly 700kg chilli and 1000kg leafy vegetable harvests.

With the new dryer, alongside technical training and capacity-building support, the Cooperative reported an **80% reduction in losses**, thanks to faster drying times (**24–36 hours vs. 10 days**) and improved storage. This shift, along with irrigation and rotational planting, is projected to **double chilli farming income** by **reducing spoilage** and **leveraging higher selling prices** (KSH 150/kg dried vs. KSH 50/kg fresh). The Cooperative has since expanded into drying other crops like cabbage, maize, and coffee.

GAA helped the Cooperative build **strong links with local government**, in addition to a partnership with regional exporter Mace Foods. The solar dryer also created over **100 seasonal jobs**, helping prepare, sort, and check crops for drying. The UK partner, EnSo Impact, also benefitted from the project, securing **two new commercial contracts** in the region.

This project shows how GAA's localised approach enabled a UK business to pilot an innovative new solution in a regionally-tailored way, which yielded benefits for both businesses and the wider community.

Delivering Inclusive and Sustainable Innovation Outcomes

Through its system-wide model for innovation, grounded in enabling innovation adoption, equitable partnerships and strategic localisation, GAA has delivered tangible outcomes across the UK and African markets.

"I believe that the pilot that we've done can be turned into award-winning products that can solve real world problems."

Joshwa Tambo (AfriFortified), Kenya OI Solution Provider

The programme has facilitated **1,156** introductions between organisations (see Figure 8), **482** between UK and African stakeholders and **510** within individual countries (Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria). This has laid the groundwork for **320** collaborative ventures, including **206** UK-Africa and **90** in-country partnerships.

These engagements resulted in **177 positive** outcomes that brought tangible benefits such as the development of new or improved products, securing of funding, job creation, technological advancements and the production of insightful reports and best practices.

Since 2019, GAA has cultivated a thriving network of over **2,700 organisations** and more than **8,200 individuals** through its events, interventions, and network-building activities (Figure 9). With over **5,700 registrations** across its events alone, the programme has consistently brought together a diverse array of stakeholders from across the innovation landscape. Notably, **30%** of the organisations GAA has engaged with are **women-led**, **20%** are **youth-led** and **66%** are **micro and small enterprises**, demonstrating GAA's strong commitment to inclusive innovation.

As seen in the case study below, GAA's emphasis on inclusion ensures that underrepresented voices are not only heard but actively integrated into the innovation process, reinforcing GAA's broader goal of fostering **equitable, sustainable growth** across its target regions.

Figure 8. GAA Outcomes since 2019



Figure 9. GAA Network since 2019



Case study

#MoreThanAWoman

The #MoreThanAWoman project, part of GAA's PBI intervention, empowers **female entrepreneurs** from South African township communities by connecting them with investors, mentors, and support networks across the UK and Africa.

For example, Mighty House of Soap, a participant in the 2023 programme, established **vital legal frameworks** and secured **two major contracts**, including a joint venture with a German biotech firm and a supply agreement with Kruger National Parks.

Through initiatives like #MoreThanAWoman, GAA demonstrates how a focus on underrepresented voices can drive meaningful innovation commercialisation, creating more resilient, equitable and dynamic innovation ecosystems across Africa.



Delivering Inclusive and Sustainable Innovation Outcomes continued

"For the longest time I had been using this unique [technology], but I couldn't tie it together into a story. That's what [GAA] really emphasised, the story. I've seen a growth surge after winning [MoreThanAWoman], because now people really understand why I'm doing what I'm doing."

**Lufuno Rasoesoe (Tosh Detergents),
South Africa PBI Beneficiary,
#MoreThanAWoman winner**

In addition to inclusion, **sustainability** is a core focus of GAA's mission, underpinning its efforts to support innovation that addresses pressing global challenges (see Figure 10). Through its **Lead Customer Programme (LCP)**, GAA has committed over **£800,000** to innovation pilots in sectors directly linked to sustainability, including water security, sustainable construction and clean energy. These targeted investments aimed to demonstrate the **commercial viability of sustainable innovative solutions** and **de-risk further investment** into sustainable innovation.

One notable area of focus, within **food security**, has been **alternative proteins**, a sector where GAA has supported a diverse range of initiatives designed to enhance food security, reduce environmental impact, and foster innovation across the UK and African markets, as shown in the case study below.

Figure 10. GAA's Range of Sustainability-Related Industries to Date



Case study

GAA's Developing Portfolio of Work Related to Alternative Proteins

GAA has taken a strategic and **multi-faceted** approach to advancing the **alternative proteins sector** across Africa, supporting a range of **high-potential innovation pilots** and ecosystem-building efforts.

This includes working with UK-based SME **FlyBox** to adapt insect-based protein technologies for local animal and fish feed, and supporting Kenyan company **Insectipro** in scaling edible insect production. Through the LCP, GAA has also helped **OnlyPlants** commercialise a plant-based milk made from bambara groundnut, and enabled **Carbonovia** to pilot sustainable yeast-based animal feed derived from agricultural waste.

Complementing this hands-on support, GAA commissioned a **rapid review** of Kenya's alternative protein landscape to identify key opportunities and challenges. Building on these insights, GAA also partnered with **Manufacturing Africa**, another FCDO programme, to develop a **comprehensive report on alternative proteins**, aimed at guiding future investment and policy in this critical area of sustainable innovation.

These efforts reflect GAA's ongoing commitment to sustainability, and demonstrating that **environmentally responsible innovation** can also be **commercially viable, scalable, and capable of driving inclusive economic growth**.



Lessons for the Future of Global Innovation Programmes

GAA set out to think beyond just innovation funding, and focus on **enabling innovation adoption and commercialisation through piloting in real-world settings, unlocking market access and building equitable partnerships**. Throughout GAA's operation, since 2019, clear lessons have emerged about how to leverage this approach to drive innovation.

01

De-risking innovation is core to market creation

Innovation alone does not unlock new markets without real-world validation, strategic partnerships and credible support mechanisms. GAA helps late-early to mid-stage technologies (TRL 4+) bridge the critical gap between concept and market entry by funding pilots in real-world settings, in addition to facilitating strategic partnerships and collaboration between industry players.

Example: In Kenya, GAA brought together Imagination Factory, a UK enterprise, with Vectorgram in Kenya to pilot the improved integration of advanced AI screening technology into Kenya's National Breast Cancer Screening Strategy. Meru Teaching and Referral Hospital hosted the pilot, which successfully showed the technology could lead to reduced screening times, increased early detection rates, and improved hospital efficiency. Following the validation of the technology in a real-world environment, plans to further integrate AI screening technology within Kenya's healthcare system are being discussed.

02

Industry partnerships are central to market access and scaling

Without strong links to the private sector, many innovations stall after proof-of-concept. Early partnerships with industry players help validate market relevance, pressure-test solutions in real-world conditions and open routes to distribution, procurement and investment. GAA strategically brokers connections between businesses, where SMEs may otherwise lack the connections to reach large companies on their own.

Example: In South Africa, the Water LCP project has enabled Coca Cola Beverage Africa (CCBA) to implement 4T2 Sensors' CIPSense system, water-saving tech that drastically reduces water usage, energy consumption, and CO2 emissions. The success has catalysed plans to scale the solution across 40 CCBA production sites across Africa.

03

Piloting innovations in real-world settings builds trust and encourages adoption

Late-stage innovations often struggle to gain traction because they seem risky or unproven. GAA has found that when solutions are tested with real users, whether in industry, government, or communities, they gain credibility, attract investment, and are better suited to real-world needs. GAA supports this by funding pilots in live environments, ensuring solutions are market-ready and relevant.

Example: In Kenya, GAA's OI facilitated a partnership between the WEEE Centre and Quinnovations to pilot solutions to e-waste challenges. As a result, the WEEE Centre secured USD400,000 in investment from Blue Planet Group to launch a local, end-to-end cathode ray tube (CRT) display recycling facility, demonstrating how targeted industry engagement can unlock funding and sustainability at scale.

Lessons for the Future of Global Innovation Programmes
continued

04

Local ecosystem
strengthening requires
embedded, equitable models

Local innovation ecosystems thrive when programmes are co-owned by regional stakeholders and aligned with local priorities. GAA has achieved this by working with regional ecosystem partners and co-developing Innovation Action Plans that reflect the needs and opportunities of each context. This builds shared ownership, strengthens institutions, and encourages long-term commitment.

Example: By co-creating a regional Innovation Action Plan and supporting the inaugural Ekiti Innovation Summit, GAA helped position innovation as a strategic pillar in state-level economic development. This enabled stronger coordination across public and private sectors, ensuring that innovation priorities reflected local needs for long-term growth. Ekiti secured an USD80 million investment from the African Development Bank and USD14.8 million in state co-funding for a new Ekiti Knowledge Zone (EKZ) in 2023.

05

Delivering investment-ready
pipelines requires structure,
credibility and strategic
positioning

Funders need clear commercial proof points, credible delivery partners and strong signals that the local ecosystem can support and sustain scale. Many innovations stall due to a lack of structured support that aligns pilots with investor expectations. GAA has helped close this gap by shaping pilots to show commercial viability, curating partnerships that enhance delivery credibility and sharing results in ways that attract and inform co-investors.

Example: Following the successful OI project with Rand Water, UK's Freshworks successfully obtained further LCP funding in partnership with South-Africa based M&D Construction to extend its partnership with Rand Water as the "lead customer". Freshworks has also secured c.£100,000 in additional investment to deliver a full-scale on-site pilot for its novel wastewater management solution. GAA not only helped demonstrate technical feasibility but positioned the project as commercially viable, with Rand Water acting as a lead customer for industry deployment.



Open Innovation (OI)

Solving Local Industrial Challenges
by Global Solutions

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02/04





Key takeaways

- **Challenge-led innovation at scale:** Open Innovation (OI) is a core intervention of GAA, enabling large corporates in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa to issue targeted innovation challenges. Solution providers from Africa, the UK, and beyond compete to develop scalable, commercially viable technologies.
- **Mutual value creation:** The model delivers benefits across the ecosystem. Challenge Holders gain access to emerging technologies and supply chain improvements. Solution Providers—often SMEs—gain funding, market access, and partnership opportunities with major corporates.
- **De-risking through pilot support:** GAA provides seed funding and expert guidance to enable real-world pilots. This approach de-risks innovation, validates commercial potential, and helps unlock follow-on investment for scale.
- **Strategic market entry for UK businesses:** OI offers UK firms a low-risk pathway into African markets by aligning innovation capabilities with clearly defined local needs. To date, GAA has invested **£332k** in over 15 UK businesses through OI, enabling pilots in partnership with established African corporates.
- **Catalyst for long-term commercial impact:** OI has proven effective in driving sustainable growth and investment. In Nigeria, Hinckley Recycling's OI-supported project led to a **\$5M investment** to establish Africa's first lithium battery recycling plant—creating over 100 jobs and positioning the region as a circular economy leader.

Innovative solutions to challenges

Open Innovation (OI) is a core intervention of the GAA programme. It connects large organisations facing complex supply chain challenges (**Challenge Holders**) with high-potential innovators (**Solution Providers**) from the UK, Africa, and globally (Figure 11). GAA identifies promising ideas, undertakes an open call for solutions, evaluates technical fit, and funds one-to-one pilots to test solutions in real-world contexts.

As shown in Figure 12, through OI, GAA helps large multi-national enterprises **access breakthrough innovations** while enabling smaller companies to reach **partners that are typically out of reach**. For solution providers, OI offers a direct path to market expansion, funding, and long-term commercial partnerships.

“

The major value is the connection, which is key. I know it's very difficult for small organisations like us to hatch partnerships with big companies, so that was a big plus.”

UK OI Solution Provider

Figure 11. Open Innovation Model

Supply chain challenges in Africa

Challenge Holders are medium/large organisations with:

- Confidential technical challenges to solve without time to explore markets
- Low exposure to companies outside the traditional industry supply chain

GAA Open
Innovation

Innovative solutions from the global market

Solution providers are technical organisations that find it difficult to:

- Open the right doors at large companies
- Prove the value proposition of products
- Align with customers' operational needs

Innovative solutions to challenges
continued

Figure 12. OI Spheres of Influence and Impact



Connecting Businesses to Accelerate Commercialisation

The OI intervention plays a central role in GAA’s system-wide approach to accelerating commercialisation by connecting **businesses, funders, and innovation stakeholders to accelerate the development and adoption of market-ready solutions**. Through innovation challenges, OI brings together large corporations seeking solutions to local supply chain challenges, and innovative businesses able to meet those needs from around the world – providing a range of critical benefits to both Challenge Holders and Solution Providers (see Table 1).

The **real-world pilots** facilitated by OI are a **critical inflection point** for solution providers. They generate **proof-of-concept, validate commercial potential, and reduce perceived risk**, laying the groundwork for **further investment and market-scale deployment**.

For **UK businesses**, this model offers a **low-risk entry point into African markets**, linking their capabilities to pressing, clearly defined local challenges. Through OI alone, GAA has invested **£332k directly in over 15 UK businesses**, enabling them to pilot solutions in partnership with leading African corporates.

Table 1. OI Benefits

Challenge Holders (often large companies)	Solution Providers (often start-ups and smaller companies)
Improve supply chain through scalable solutions with minimal risk and early investment	Receive pilot funding to test innovative solutions, de-risking projects and promoting commercialisation
Enhance exposure to emerging technologies through a trusted intermediary (GAA)	Opportunity to partner with larger multi-national businesses
Access to a broad network of cross-sector expertise through new partnerships	Develop innovative solutions/apply existing technology for new markets

“One of solution providers came up with the idea of using solar energy to dry water treatment residue, while we were more focused on mechanical dewatering options. So that was an out-of-the-box idea that we really liked, and are now pursuing. Solar drying was always there, but we just had not thought about it until meeting the solution provider”

**Judith Seopa (Rand Water),
South Africa OI Challenge Holder**

Additionally, GAA’s holistic approach to accelerating innovation commercialisation is reflected in its **network of academics, industry experts and pitch trainers**. Input and support from a wide-range of tailored sources, mediated by GAA, contributes towards helping innovators develop and test competitive, market-ready and scalable solutions.

“Innovate UK funded my flight and paid for a driver for me to go to Kenya and visit the Challenge Holder, who were doing an Innovation Week. They were fantastic for doing that.”

**Rose Kay (Gazooky Studios),
UK OI Solution Provider**

The Lasting Impact of Open Innovation

Open Innovation has enabled the creation of **scalable solutions to real market needs** of large corporates, while giving smaller firms, UK SMEs among them, a credible path into new markets.

As seen in the following case studies, by validating their technologies through local pilots, these businesses have **strengthened their investment case** and **unlocked long-term commercial opportunities**.

Open Innovation is also committed to advancing commercially viable solutions to **sustainability challenges**. By funding pilots in areas such as **e-waste**, **clean energy access**, and **water treatment**, GAA enables

innovators to prove that environmental impact and profitability can be well aligned. This approach gives larger corporates the confidence to engage with **emerging green technologies**, **reducing adoption risk**, **shifting perceptions**, and **accelerating more inclusive, future-focused innovation**.

Beyond individual project outcomes, Open Innovation can contribute to **broader shifts in innovation ecosystems**. Successful pilots attract

follow-on investment, increase visibility among funders, and build confidence in emerging sectors. They can also pave the way for **new partnerships** and enable solutions to **scale across regions**. The following case study highlights how early-stage collaboration can lay the foundation for long-term commercial and ecosystem impact.

Case study

Water Treatment Residuals (WTR) in South Africa

In collaboration with Africa's largest bulk water utility, Rand Water, the GAA programme launched an OI challenge to address the management and commercialisation of Water Treatment Residuals (WTR) in South Africa.

The challenge, won by UK company Freshworks, resulted in the development of a centrifugal system that achieved **very high filtration efficiency**. This lab prototype is now being scaled up for commercial use, to be tested as a full-scale pilot on-site at Rand Water. When fully operational, this will allow Rand Water to **treat WTR on-site**, rather

than transporting it to a secondary site to dry the residue in large beds, which would represent a **significant efficiency saving and free up over 100 hectares of land for other uses**. Follow-on funding for the full-scale pilot was successfully secured through GAA's [Water Lead Customer Programme](#).

This collaboration highlights how GAA can foster impactful partnerships between innovators and large corporates, creating **commercial value**, driving **local efficiencies**, and delivering broader benefits for both businesses and communities.



Case study

Transforming Electronic Waste into Eco-Friendly Solutions

Faced with a growing backlog of Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) displays, Kenya's WEEE Centre partnered with Swedish firm Milav and laboratory RISE through a GAA OI Challenge to pilot a scalable, locally adapted recycling solution. Samples of lead-free panel glass (80% of CRT glass) were sent to RISE for analysis to determine their chemical composition. Milav then helped to **identify a customer for the recycled glass within the local Kenyan market**, a local glass studio creating household glassware and art pieces using recycled glass. Together, they helped develop high-value sample glassware as a proof of concept for this new supply chain.

A complementary pilot project with UK-based Quinnovations was also conducted, testing the innovative process of '**ultrasonic agitation**' a method of separating fractions from the lead-containing funnel glass (20% of CRT glass). The glass fractions were

used as components of sustainable construction blocks, and lead fractions allowed reuse or resale.

An additional/spin-off tech developed on-site allows the processing of computer PCBs (Printed Circuit Boards) to salvage precious metals. Instead of shipping these abroad for processing (costing **USD80,000 per year**) this tech creates an additional source of income for the WEEE Center.

With the positive outcomes from this pilot, Milav, RISE and Quinnovations together provided WEEE Center with a **complete roadmap for the processing and repurposing of CRTs**, leading to WEEE Center securing **USD400,000 in investment** from Blue Planet Group to develop East Africa's first Urban Mining Center for CRT and PCB.

This illustrates GAA's role in enabling **cross-border innovation** to solve **local challenges**, creating **new supply chains**, and laying the foundation for **long-term commercial uptake** of sustainable technologies.



The Lasting Impact of Open Innovation
continued

Case study

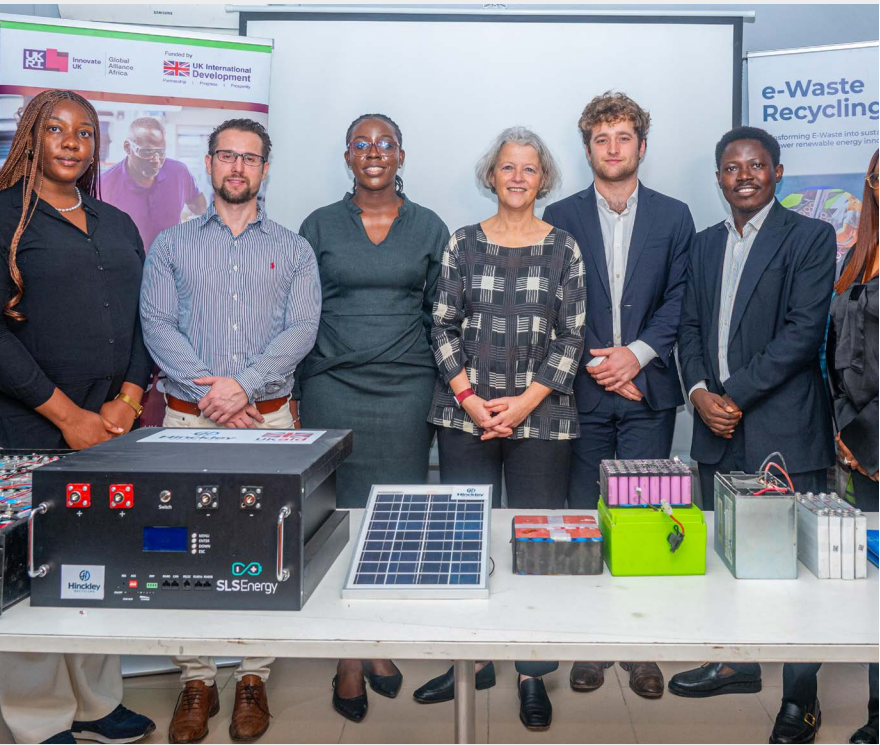
A second life
for lithium-ion
batteries in
Nigeria

Hinckley Recycling, Nigeria's leading battery waste handler, was facing a surge in lithium-ion battery packs, receiving over 15,000 units annually and growing rapidly, without adequate systems for reuse or tracking. Through a GAA OI Challenge, the company partnered with UK firms Enverse and Aceleron, along with Rwanda-based SLS Energy, to develop second-life battery solutions.

The project delivered a suite of innovations: a modular battery pack (Aceleron), a digital battery passport for traceability (Enverse), and a low-cost energy storage system projected to reduce end-user costs by 40% (SLS

Energy). These solutions helped secure a **\$5 million government investment** to establish **Africa's first lithium battery recycling facility** in Ogun State, expected to create over **100 jobs** and set the region up as a hub for circular battery innovation.

Hinckley projects that **50% of the new plant's projected revenue** will stem directly from technologies developed through this pilot, demonstrating how GAA, through OI, **promotes innovation** and **accelerates the commercialisation of sustainable, market-ready solutions**.



Place-Based
Innovation
(PBI)

Localisation to Drive Innovation Adoption

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The Lasting Impact of Place-Based Innovation	36



Key takeaways

- **Localising innovation:** Place-Based Innovation (PBI) grounds innovation within diverse African regions by connecting innovators to local experts and global networks, promoting co-creation anchored in localisation, particularly in historically underserved areas.
- **Unlocking innovation adoption through localisation:** GAA co-develops local innovation strategies with governments, academia, and civil society, in order to help both African and UK businesses adapt to local contexts and build trust in new markets.
- **Market entry for UK innovators through local co-creation:** PBI offers UK businesses a pathway into high-potential, underexplored markets by supporting demand-driven, community-aligned solutions.
 - For example, through the SOFI-2 initiative, GAA has funded **9 collaborative pilot projects** in South Africa, involving **38 small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs)** from the UK and South Africa across sectors like water, food and energy.
- **Lasting impact through ecosystem strengthening:** PBI has helped shape policy, driven innovation commercialisation and catalysed investment mobilisation by promoting innovation aligned with local needs.
 - For example, in Ekiti State, Nigeria, GAA's work has helped attract over **\$94 million USD** in additional investment to the region, including state co-funding for the Ekiti Knowledge Zone (EKZ), projected to generate **26,000 jobs** and **\$14 million USD annually**. GAA also empowered marginalised groups in Ekiti to lead innovation through programmes like the Young Innovators Award.

Localising Innovation for Sustainable Impact

Place-Based Innovation (PBI) is a core intervention within the GAA programme, designed to catalyse inclusive, sustainable innovation ecosystems by **anchoring innovation efforts within the local realities** of diverse regions across Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. Unlike one-size-fits-all approaches, PBI is **intentionally adaptive, co-created with local stakeholders** to reflect **regional needs, opportunities, and cultural contexts**. By connecting small-scale innovators with broader UK–Africa networks, PBI bridges gaps between grassroots solutions and global expertise, fostering innovation ecosystems that are equitable, resilient, and deeply rooted in place.

The PBI process is structured around five interconnected elements: **Place, People, Purpose, Principles and Projects**. These guide how innovation is shaped and delivered within a specific context. This framework recognises that real change is driven by local actors working together around a shared goal. By aligning these five pillars (see Figure 13), PBI fosters inclusive, resilient solutions rooted in the realities of each place.

PBI responds to strong local demand for **shorter, more resilient supply chains**, greater integration of **circular economy principles** and improved connections between the formal innovation sector and informal economies, particularly in **underserved or historically excluded regions**. In response to these needs, as shown in the diagram below (Figure 14), GAA's PBI activities are designed to enable local actors to better understand and influence their

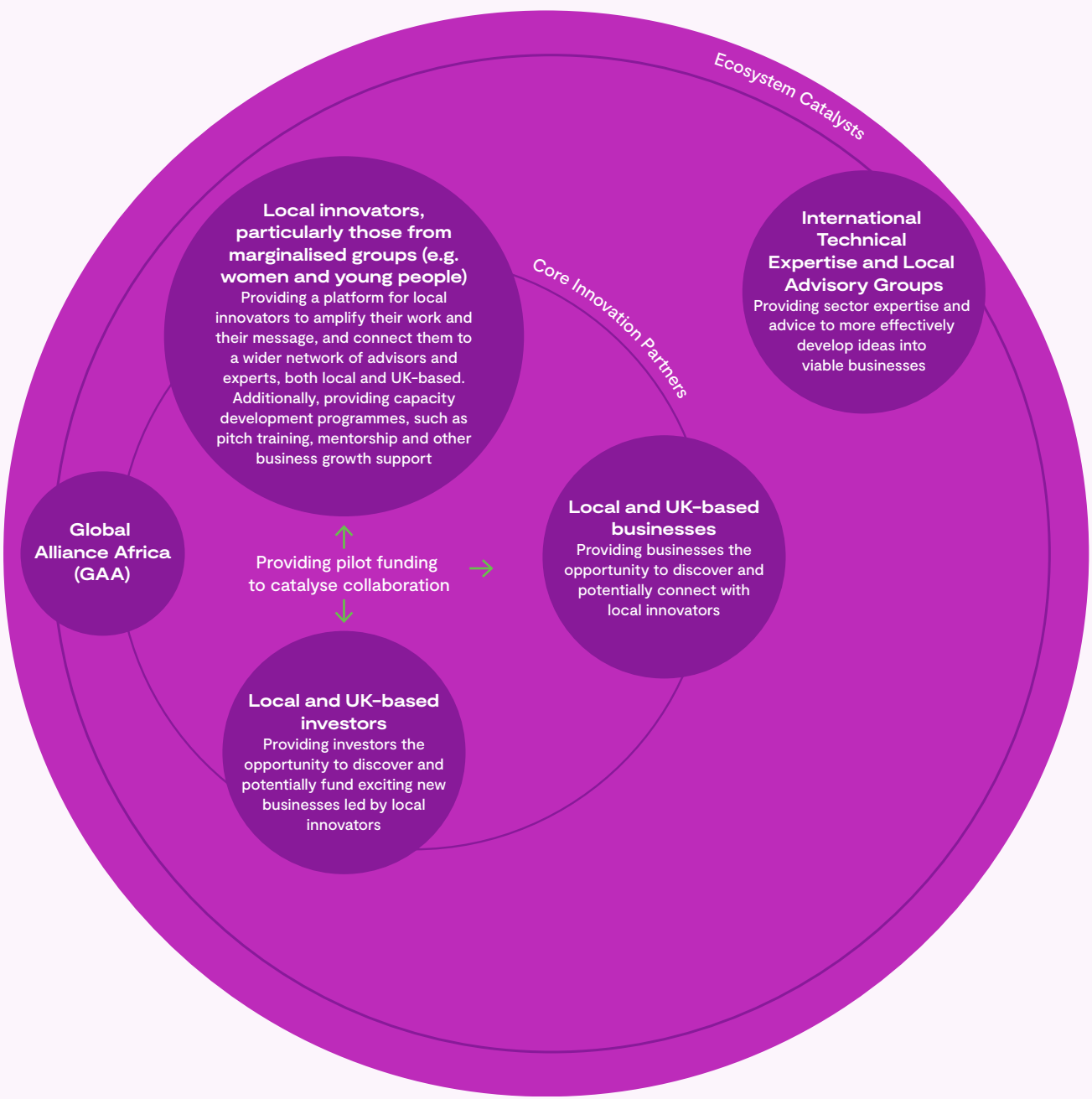
own innovation environments, closing gaps between policy, practice and community priorities. Through PBI, local innovators have the opportunity to **access knowledge, expertise and networks** based both in-country and the UK as well.

Figure 13. The Five 'Ps' of Place Based Innovation



Localising Innovation for Sustainable Impact
continued

Figure 14. PBI Spheres of Influence and Impact



Unlocking Innovation for Local Ecosystems

Through PBI, GAA has worked closely with **local governments, business, academia, and civil society** to co-create innovation strategies grounded in **long-term, local leadership**. This ecosystem-level focus not only supports local entrepreneurship but also helps UK and African firms navigate **context-specific challenges** and adapt technologies to local conditions.

"One of the best things [GAA has done] is bringing in the public and private sector to intersect with the tertiary institutions and research. Now when a potential innovator comes, or plans to come, to the state, they can look at the opportunities and likely players (complimentary and competitive) that are already there."
Professor Ayodele Ajayi, Ekiti Advisory Council member, Nigeria

For UK businesses, PBI presents a **valuable entry point into underexplored markets** and high-potential innovation ecosystems. As seen in the case study below, by working alongside local actors and aligning with regional priorities, UK innovators who are seeking to enter new markets are better positioned to co-create commercially viable solutions that meet real-world demand within new African markets.

Case study

SOFI and the Agri-Energy Integration Project

SOFI (Scaling Out For Impact) is a key GAA initiative, jointly led by Innovate UK KTN and South Africa's Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). It supports **9 collaborative innovation projects** involving **38 small, medium and micro enterprises** (SMMEs) from the UK and South Africa, focusing on water, food, and energy in underserved areas.

One standout project is the **Agri-Energy Integration Project** in Limpopo and Mpumalanga. It brings together Agr-Smart Tech, a South African agriculture company, and UK biomass specialists Micrea to support smallholder farmers with sustainable, tech-based farming solutions. Their pilot focused on growing Bana grass and Moringa oleifera, crops suited to tough conditions, that support both food and biofuel production.

The project was shaped with **local input** through **feasibility studies, community hiring, and workshops**. As a result of the project, the crops were successfully planted and a biomass conversion system has been **fully operationalised** in the UK.

Through enabling this co-creation process, GAA facilitated the introduction of new technologies embedded in local systems, creating **new income streams** for farmers and subsequently attracting **investor interest** across Africa and Asia.



The Lasting Impact of Place-Based Innovation

Since its launch, the PBI intervention has delivered a broad range of outcomes, from **entrepreneurial capacity building** to **investment mobilisation** and **innovation ecosystem strengthening**. As seen in the case study below, at the heart of these results is GAA's commitment to **localising innovation** and allowing that to be a driving force behind commercialisation, ensuring that solutions are co-created with and for the communities they aim to serve.

As seen in the case study below, PBI's locally grounded approach has enabled more effective alignment between innovation and market demand, creating the right conditions for sustainable commercialisation. Through this model, GAA has shown that innovation rooted in place can unlock economic opportunities, drive long-term growth, and expand access to markets for both African and UK-based businesses.

Case study

Plusfarm Kenya



With support from GAA, Plusfarm Kenya, an agritech start-up, was able to develop its platform, which tackled inefficiencies in Kenya's agricultural value chain by connecting smallholder farmers with local experts. Through PBI, Plusfarm received **tailored coaching from industry experts** and **cross-continental knowledge exchange** that enabled it to **commercialise its platform effectively**, from a free service to a fee-based expert marketplace.

GAA also facilitated connections to Assentian, a Blockchain innovation company based in the UK. Plusfarm was able to **pilot the integration of**

blockchain technology to enhance farmers' market access both locally and internationally. This pilot offered **critical market insights into the applicability of the technology in low-resource settings**.

As a result of the pilot, PlusFarm won a **contract to deliver training for young people** on digital technology for their agribusinesses, through the FCDO's Digital Access Programme in Kenya. GAA has also continued to work closely with Assentian to **identify new local partners** and **strengthen community buy-in** for future piloting of the technology in Eldoret.

Case study

Sebenzisa Tembisa Waste Challenge

"For a long time, science and innovation have been seen to be for the exclusive few. The Innovate UK-led Tembisa Waste Challenge is proof that they are for the people and with the people. Communities can now use science-based solutions to improve their everyday lives."

Buti Makama, Innovate UK Gauteng Innovation Advisory Group, South Africa

The **Sebenzisa Tembisa Waste Challenge** was a community-driven initiative launched in South Africa, through PBI. **Four pilot teams** were selected to receive grants of **£10,000** each to test new circular-economy approaches to local waste management. These included:

- Converting landfill waste into biodiesel (Lathitha Biodiesel with University of Surrey & TelioGreen)
- Turning plastic waste into affordable building materials (University of Johannesburg & Reyaxuma Projects)
- Replacing paraffin with ethanol fuel made from food waste (Stellenbosch University & Green Business College)
- Deploying rapid composting machines for organic waste (CSIR, Compostable Plastics Council SA & Clean City SA).

Through **collaborative events** and **advisory groups**, GAA provided **expert guidance**, helping each team to refine operational plans, ensuring research insights seamlessly **integrated with community needs**. As a result, all four pilots are poised to: **divert significant volumes of waste from landfill**; generate **new local employment** in collection, processing and distribution; and **demonstrate scalable, sustainable models for circular economy growth**.



Global Innovation Network (GIN)

Aligning Innovation Needs Through Closer UK-Africa Networks

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Building Bilateral UK-Africa Relationships to Strengthen Commercialisation Pathways	41
The Lasting Impact of Global Innovation Networks	42

04/04



Key takeaways

■ **UK-Africa Innovation Networks:** GAA's Global Innovation Network (GIN) connects UK and African businesses through sector-specific networks that promote knowledge exchange and innovation partnership aligned to partner country economic and societal priorities.

■ **Catalysing collaboration Through Funding:** GAA's Lead Customer Programme (LCP) funds UK-Africa pilot projects, endorsed by trusted partners, to test and scale new technologies in real-world settings. Over £800k has been invested by GAA through the LCP to date.

■ **Opening New Opportunities in Emerging Sectors:** GAA leverages its GINs to position UK capabilities in high-potential developing sectors in Africa, such as alternative proteins, aligning UK strengths with emerging local demand

■ **Strengthening Two-Way Learning:** GIN fosters mutual benefit for African and Global partners by helping African partners gain access to cutting-edge global innovations, while contributing local expertise and context, fostering two-way learning that drives more regionally relevant solutions capable of achieving commercialisation and scale

■ **Driving Sustainable Innovation:** GIN has facilitated impactful cross-border innovation by connecting UK expertise with African partners through networks and pilot funding to co-develop scalable and sustainable solutions, unlocking mutual business growth and long-term economic and social impact through collaborative innovation.

- For example, through the UK-South Africa Water Security GIN, GAA has helped secure **£500,000** in funding via the Water Lead Customer Programme (WLCP), strengthening innovation in the water sector. One of the many collaborative UK-South Africa projects under the WLCP, the Kaloola project, has delivered clean, waterless sanitation to **900 people** in Durban, safely removing **43 tonnes of waste** and creating **10 local jobs**.

Facilitating UK-Africa Collaboration for Scalable Innovation

The Global Innovation Network (GIN) is a central intervention within GAA, operating through sector-specific UK-Africa networks in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. GIN facilitates **knowledge** exchange and **joint innovation activities** tailored to country-specific priorities. The figure below shows the range of sectors in which GAA has created UK-Africa GINs.

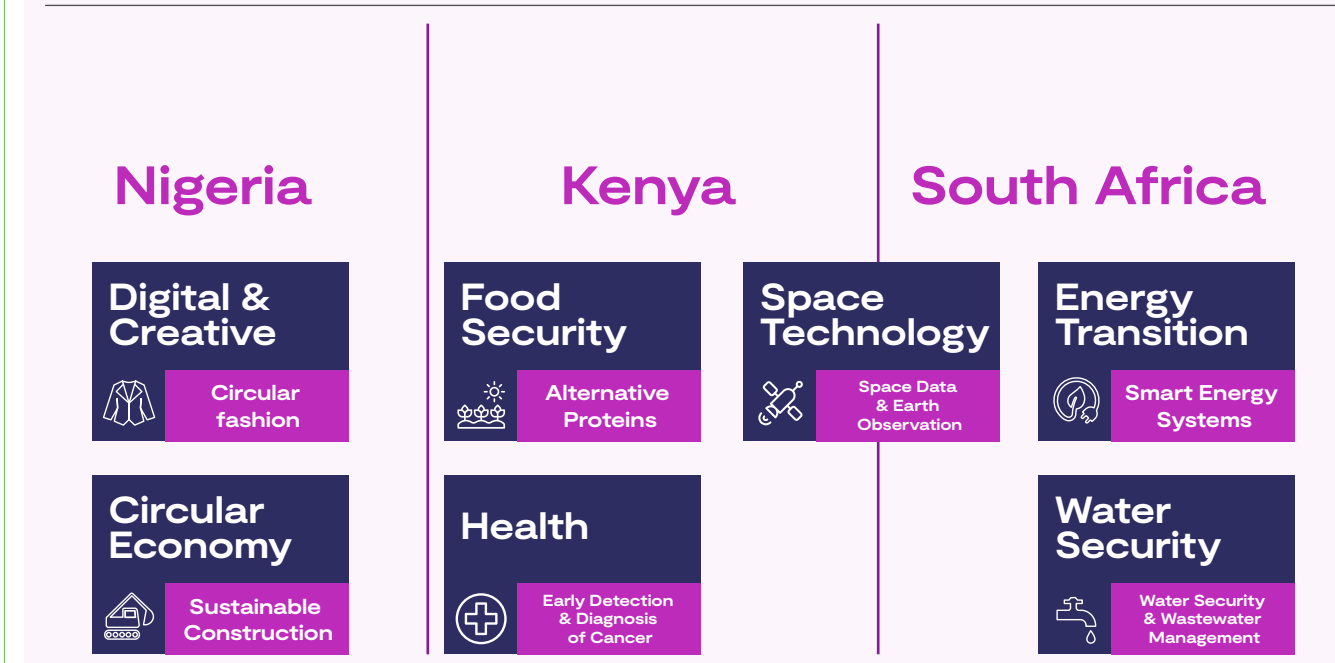
The diagram below (Figure 16) shows the critical role GAA plays through GIN, as a trusted intermediary that brings together **UK and Africa-based companies**. It then provides an opportunity for both **cross-sector** and **cross-border knowledge-sharing** and collaboration. This collaboration is further enhanced through the support of **academics** and **industry experts** and catalysed by funding provided by GAA through its funding model, the **Lead Customer Programme (LCP)**.

GAA's **LCP** provides funding to promising UK-Africa partnerships, backed by the endorsement from a **Lead Customer**, an African or UK supplier, company, or high-profile end-user, who **commits to deploying the proposed innovations**. To date, GAA has provided over **£800k in funding through the LCP**. These pilots help assess the viability of technologies in real-world settings, which can help businesses on the path to **commercialisation**, by **de-risking projects** and **encouraging further investment** from the Lead Customers, in addition to buy-in from other stakeholders and potential partners.

“This pilot has demonstrated how technology can bridge the information gap in healthcare, ensuring that patients receive the right information at the right time. The impact on patient engagement and understanding has been remarkable.”

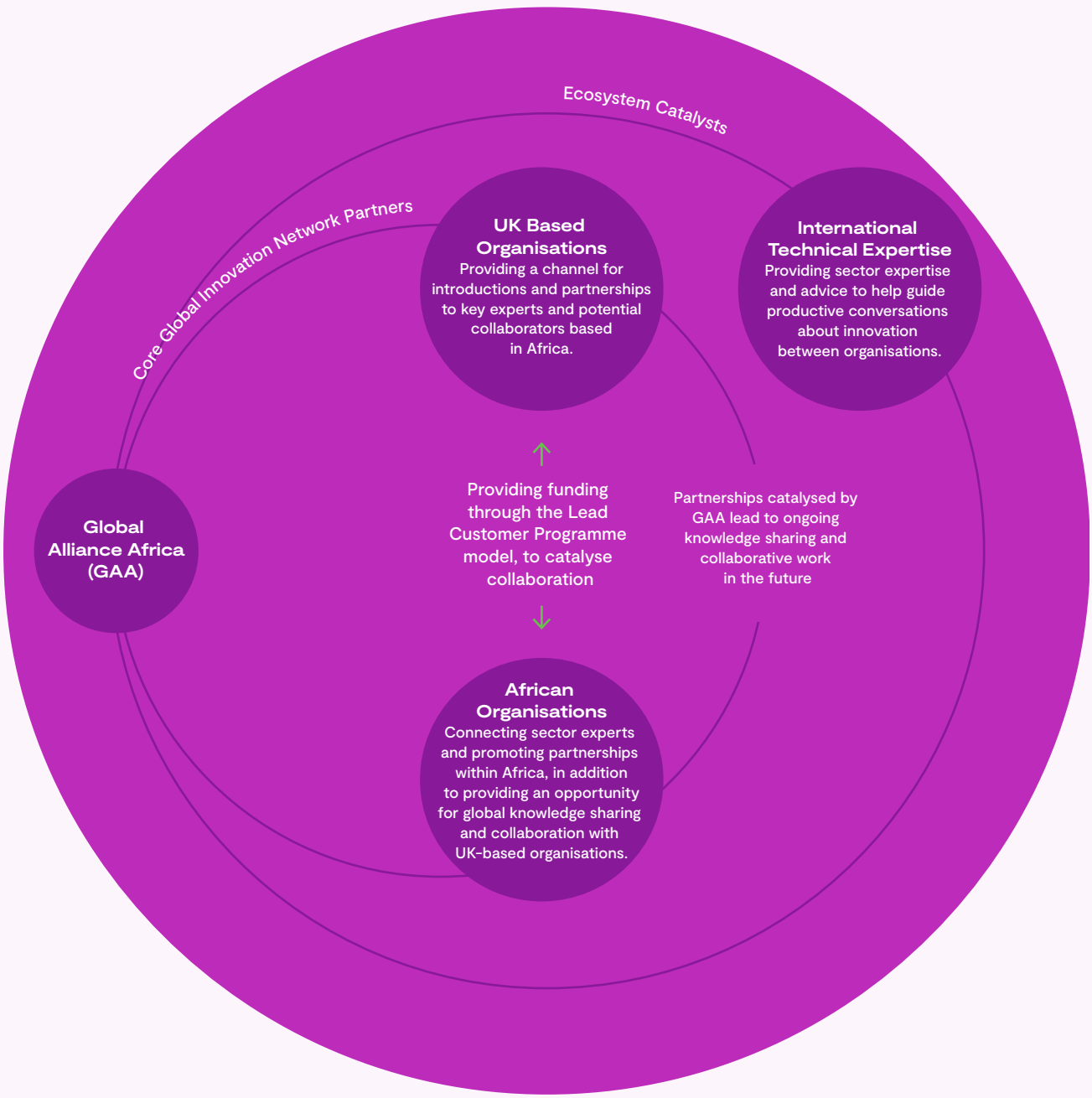
Dr Hudson Alakonya, PhD, Cancer Radiopharmaceuticals R&D, Kenya

Figure 15. GAA's GINs Across Nigeria, Kenya and South African



Facilitating UK-Africa Collaboration for Scalable Innovation
continued

Figure 16. GIN Spheres of Influence and Impact



Building Bilateral UK-Africa Relationships
to Strengthen Commercialisation Pathways

Through structured collaboration and co-funded pilots, GIN and the LCP create pathways for commercialisation by validating innovations in real-world settings. This can be particularly beneficial for UK businesses expanding into new African markets.

Expanding into a new market can be challenging due to **limited knowledge of local ecosystems, unfamiliar regulations, and scattered networks**. Businesses may also face **misleading or incomplete information** about the local innovation landscape. GIN helps overcome these challenges by acting as a **trusted intermediary**, offering UK innovators **access to local insights, relevant partners, and in-country networks**. The **pilot funding** through the LCP also provides an opportunity for UK businesses to enter new markets by first **testing innovative solutions locally**, de-risking solutions before attempting to scale.

"The funding was catalytic because it enabled us to start working with new suppliers and new local partners, in addition to the ones that we already had by virtue of the funding. So it wasn't just introductions, but it was the funding that was required for us to progress the project."
Virginia Gardiner (Loowatt), LCP Stakeholder, UK

GIN also plays a key role in positioning UK capabilities in **high-potential technology areas** such as alternative proteins, sustainable textiles and digital health. These sectors, where the UK has

established expertise, are often **nascent but rapidly evolving** in African markets, creating a strategic opportunity for early engagement.

"This is a UK technology in a developing country, where the costs seem exorbitant. But when you compare that to the ROI, it's almost a no-brainer. With this [LCP] project, we were able to show that the payback period for the project is just 2 months, which is unheard of in our sector."
Sabin Nair (PCS Global), LCP Stakeholder, South Africa

Figure 17. GAA's role as a bridge between UK and African Businesses through GIN



Building Bilateral UK–Africa Relationships to Strengthen
Commercialisation Pathways
continued

At the same time, GIN creates significant value for African businesses by providing **access to global innovations** that may otherwise be difficult to access. These collaborations foster **two-way learning**, allowing African partners to adapt and apply cutting-edge technologies within local contexts, while contributing vital knowledge and insights to global partners that help shape more relevant and effective solutions (see Figure 17).

Some of the many solutions catalysed by GIN in this way include integrating AI into breast cancer diagnosis, turning textile waste into high-quality paper and recycling waste from demolitions for 3D printing-based construction. This exchange of advanced global expertise and deep local knowledge of regional needs strengthens innovation on both sides and supports the creation of **inclusive, market-ready solutions for local and global challenges**

“

GAA allowed me to come to Oxford and London and talk to different stakeholders, understand what they're doing, how they're doing it. That helps me now to go back to Kenya and say how can I work with these insights to build a pipeline. I can also leverage some of the people and organisations that we met.”

Charles Mwangi (Kenyan Space Agency), Space GIN Advisor, Kenya

The Lasting
Impact of Global
Innovation
Networks

GIN has proven effective in fostering innovation by facilitating cross-border partnerships between public, private and research actors. As seen in the following case study, through its ability to convene **diverse stakeholders** and **channel funding into underserved sectors**, GIN has supported the development of **scalable solutions** that strengthen infrastructure, and inclusive participation in innovation ecosystems.

Furthermore, by enabling the intersection of **sustainability** and commercial innovation, GIN helps unlock new forms of value creation that align with global shifts toward more **circular** and **environmentally responsible economies**. As seen in the case study below, its networks have allowed local industries to **integrate advanced practices while preserving unique regional identities**, supporting long-term economic and environmental transformation.

Finally, GIN plays a critical role in accelerating the adoption of emerging technologies in African markets by creating **pathways for co-creation** and **localisation**. Its approach has strengthened **digital readiness**, expanded **access to global expertise**, and enhanced the capacity of health and other essential sectors to **respond to evolving social needs** through collaborative innovation.

Case study

UK–South Africa
Water Security
GIN – The
Kaloola Project



The UK–South Africa Water Security GIN brings together UK and South African companies to drive innovation in water security and wastewater management. With **£500,000** in funding secured via the **Water Lead Customer Programme (WLCP)**, co-funded with South Africa's Technology and Innovation Agency (TIA), the initiative has **strengthened innovation in water access, treatment and management**.

A key project under the WLCP has been the Kaloola project, which tackled sanitation challenges in Durban. UK company Loowatt worked with South Africa's Khanyisa Projects and the Lead Customer eThekweni Municipality to install a waterless toilet system that saves water and recovers energy and nutrients. The project brought clean and safe sanitation to about 900 people across 152 households. Over 8,000 services were delivered, removing 43 tonnes of waste safely. 10 jobs were also created, mainly for members of the communities serviced

This work reflects GAA's broader role in fostering practical UK–Africa innovation partnerships that deliver real-world impact, strengthen local innovation ecosystems, and support inclusive, sustainable development.

Case study



UK–Nigeria
Circular Fashion
GIN – Afrikstabel
Textiles

The UK–Nigeria Circular Fashion GIN, supported by GAA, is driving **sustainable innovation in Nigeria's fashion** industry by connecting UK expertise with local artisanal traditions.

The network promotes **circular fashion practices** through collaborative engagement between designers, researchers, and entrepreneurs, emphasising ethical sourcing and environmentally responsible production.

A key achievement has been the integration of **advanced wastewater management** into the traditional **Adire dyeing process**, championed by AfrikStabel Textiles, demonstrating how **modern sustainability techniques can enhance cultural practices**.

This initiative exemplifies how GAA fosters meaningful cross-border collaboration to support **green innovation rooted in local context** and more **resilient innovation ecosystems** across Africa.

The Lasting Impact of Global Innovation Networks
continued

Case study

UK-Kenya Health
GIN – Liberate
Pro pilot



A UK-Kenya partnership between Alpha MD and The Pathology Network, supported by GAA, piloted the Liberate Pro digital health platform to improve patient engagement by delivering **personalised, culturally relevant medical information**.

The project addressed key communication gaps in Kenya's healthcare system by localising the platform, integrating WhatsApp and local languages, and involved collaboration with over **10 medical institutions** and **100 healthcare providers**. It demonstrated strong potential for digital health adoption, improving health literacy, reducing environmental impact, and **opening new markets for UK health-tech innovation**.

The next steps involve scaling up the Liberate Pro platform by expanding its reach to more healthcare institutions and training facilities. This will include **refining localisation efforts**, such as **customization for different user groups** and **deeper integration into clinical workflows**.

The initiative shows how GAA's efforts enabled successful piloting, laying the groundwork for sustainable scaling, ongoing capacity building, and long-term impact.



