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E4Impact MBA, The Training Programme Dedicated to the New Generation of African Entrepreneurs

With the highest entrepreneurship rate in the world (22%) and a rapidly growing demographic population (1.2 billion), Africa is a continent rich in business opportunities. The challenge is to turn its potential into a source of concrete and inclusive development, in a reality where the business mortality rate continues to be very high (80%). Among the reasons for this negative statistic is the large skills gap in management and financial planning.

These are the premises under which E4Impact's MBA in Impact Entrepreneurship was born, an innovative experiment to train a new generation of African entrepreneurs capable of creating high-impact social enterprises.

1.2bn

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"In the same year that the MBA was launched, the success of the initiative led to the creation of a business unit within ALTIS specifically dedicated to activities in Africa: E4Impact

The start of E4Impact's activities in Africa is closely connected with ALTIS, the Graduate School of Business and Society founded in 2004 at the Catholic University of Milan. ALTIS, shortly after its establishment, was commissioned to carry out a training project, precisely, a Master's programme to train the future managers of Africa. The first editions were held in Castel Gandolfo (Rome), but the project soon after moved to Milan, where the critical nature of the implemented model emerged - the creation of an involuntary brain drain. In fact, many qualified students ended up staying in Italy, depriving the African continent of its talent. So ALTIS decided to go to Africa, moving activities directly to the territory and establishing strategic partnerships with local universities. As a result of this initiative, the first MBA was launched in Nairobi in 2010, in partnership with Tanzaga University College in Nairobi and was open to entrepreneurs from all African countries. The format was designed not to compete with existing training programmes in the African academic context, but with the idea of offering an MBA to high social impact entrepreneurs, that is, those who do not need training to find work but to create it, for the benefit of the entire community. In the same year that the MBA was launched, the success of the initiative led to the creation of a business unit within ALTIS specifically dedicated to activities in Africa:

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E4Impact. It was set to better manage the MBA, which was transformed into an executive course and replicated in other countries to solve the entrepreneurial issue of running a business from afar throughout the duration of the programme.

In 2015, E4Impact became a Foundation in order to gain more operational autonomy and development opportunities. Subsequently, E4Impact opened five more offices across Africa and in 2019 founded the E4Impact University Alliance, based on a partnership of 21 African universities that share the ambitious vision of "being the largest pan-African community of internationally recognised universities promoting entrepreneurship with strong social and environmental impact on the African continent and beyond."

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E4Impact's MBA is a hands-on entrepreneurship training programme for African entrepreneurs eager to create or grow a high-impact social and environmental business, with an approach that combines academic rigour and business acceleration. It supports participants in transforming a business idea into a business model and business plan, developing useful skills for running a growing business, and connecting them with a strategic network of partners and investors.

The MBA plan has distinctive features that make it particularly innovative and suited to the needs of African entrepreneurs. One of the main ones is the blended delivery formula, which combines periods of classroom training (about 36 days throughout the year) with others dedicated to distance learning and the application of the concepts learned to their own business. In this way, students have the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired in the classroom directly to their business activities, without having to interrupt their work activities. In addition, students have the opportunity to participate in a final business competition to present their entrepreneurial project and receive feedback from faculty, alumni and business experts.

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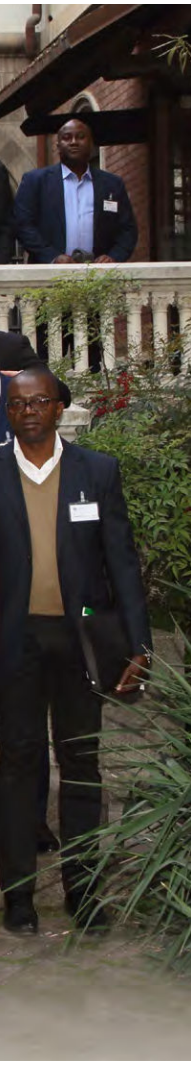

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The programme also includes the support of a full-time business coach, who is at the disposal of each entrepreneur throughout the course. The coach provides clarification and guidance on the application of the concepts acquired in the classroom, introduces the entrepreneur to potential suppliers and/or customers, and also to investors if the company is deemed ready for investment. Finally, the programme provides an e-learning platform designed for African entrepreneurs and accessible in areas where bandwidth is scarce. The platform offers resources, examples and business cases related to African experiences developed by both MBA faculty and alumni to give students access to a wide range of useful tools in developing their entrepreneurial business more effectively.

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Initially, the concrete impact measurement of the MBA was based on direct observations and feedback from beneficiaries, but over time it has evolved into a structured system that includes extensive collection and management of high-quality data to make data-driven strategic decisions. At the end of the course, a final evaluation makes it possible to measure the level of learning achieved and the satisfaction of participants. The Foundation, indeed, has developed an internal monitoring system based on the Theory of Change, which measures the outcomes achieved. According to its Impact Management System, by carrying out its main entrepreneurial training activities, E4Impact has generated social value through four main avenues: encouraging the development of high-potential start-ups that can withstand competitive pressure; supporting the development and scale-up of existing companies; removing the main obstacles that entrepreneurs face, such as access to financing and global markets; contributing to job creation as well as decent and equal work.

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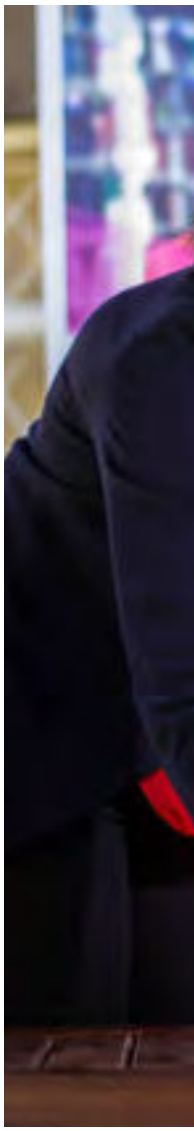

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In just a few years, the goals set at the beginning have been met and exceeded. To date, the MBA has been conducted in 15 African countries, and the more than 1,600 trained entrepreneurs have created an average of 6 jobs each

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In just a few years, the goals set at the beginning have been met and exceeded. To date, the MBA has been conducted in 15 African countries, and the more than 1,600 trained entrepreneurs have created an average of 6 jobs each. Among these entrepreneurs involved in the project, 98% increased their revenue; 41% gained access to financing; 57% started a new business, while 22% opened new branches.

Relying on its MBA experience, E4Impact has also been involved in several development projects. In fact, it has lent its expertise in entrepreneurship training to members and managers of rural cooperatives, thereby improving their productivity and creating for young people in vulnerable conditions the opportunity to increase their income and remain in their hometown.

This activity brought direct benefits to almost 10,000 other entrepreneurs, while another 37,720 people got indirect benefit thanks to multilateral projects. These activities combined, reflect the true goal of E4Impact: to help generate a virtuous circle of sustainable and inclusive development through the creation of networks and knowledge sharing, rooted within African countries and capable of having a truly transformative impact.

10,000

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