The article focuses on the understanding the entrepreneurship market in Botswana and ways in which to explore collaborations and programs to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

Dr. Surya Raghu, founder president of Advanced Fluidics – a high-tech company located in the US – and a Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Science at Wits University in South Africa, recently visited research and educational institutions in Botswana. During the visits, he engaged in meetings and discussions related to innovation, research commercialization, and understanding the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Botswana. His objective was to explore collaborations and programs for capacity building in innovation and entrepreneurship within Botswana.

Botswana boasts a favorable ecosystem, achieving the highest ranking by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM 2015) in post-school entrepreneurial education, entrepreneurial finance, and physical infrastructure. The WIPO Global Innovation Index (GII 2022) similarly ranks Botswana above the Sub-Saharan average across all seven pillars of metrics.

The Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation (BITRI) is an advanced research institution, tasked with the mandate of conducting “needs-based research” in areas critical to Botswana. Visiting under the invitation of the Institute’s Director of Research and Partnerships, Dr. Raghu presented on innovation and research commercialization and took a tour of their excellent lab facilities. He engaged in discussions with Dr. Samuel Chigome, past-president of the African Materials Research Society, and Dr. Maithwarelo Matsheka, head of the nanomaterials department, in order to explore further collaborations for joint activities in research and innovation programs.
Examples of commercialization achievements stemming from BITRI include the production of face masks using electrospinning and ongoing development of test kits for bovine diseases.

Dr. Raghu’s next visit was to the Botswana Digital & Innovation Hub (BDIH), where he met with their director, Mr. Diane Mongudi, and engaged in discussions with the innovation manager, Mr. Obakeng Segwagwe, regarding possible partnerships with other institutions in Botswana to conduct an innovation and entrepreneurship workshop at their headquarters. Situated within a 57-hectare, 60-million dollar facility, the BDIH houses both a Science and Technology Park and an incubator, providing an ideal ecosystem for startups to thrive. Mr. Segwagwe expressed keen interest in hosting an innovation-driven entrepreneurship workshop at the BDIH.

The final visit was at the University of Botswana in Gaborone, where Dr. Raghu met with the deans, deputy deans, and program directors within the Faculty of Engineering, Science, and Medicine to discuss their activities in research, innovation, and entrepreneurship. He also met with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Enterprise, Professor Doreen Ramogola-Masire, who extended her support for a workshop on innovation and entrepreneurship.

Innovation, research commercialization, and entrepreneurial skills are poised to connect solutions with market needs. The interconnection of all research and educational institutions and the local innovation ecosystem in Botswana, along with increased emphasis and training in innovation and entrepreneurship, will promote local entrepreneurial activity. The limited size of Botswana’s markets is no disadvantage — with its receptive environment for innovation, favorable policies, and developing institutions nurturing collaborative innovation — Botswana has the potential to serve as excellent testing grounds for innovative solutions and products within Africa for broader expansion across the continent.