CNN Marketplace Africa explores the tech industry in South Africa

Cape Town in often viewed through its iconic Table Mountain and beautiful waterfront. This week on *CNN Marketplace Africa*, host Zain Asher reports from the South African city and reveals it may soon also be known as a destination for technology.

The Open Medicine project

A Cape Town based tech start-up, The Open Medicine Project founded by Mohammed Dalwai and Yaseen Khan, has created a series of mobile apps that assist frontline healthcare workers in developing markets.

Dalwai and Khan are both doctors from Cape Town who had no experience in app development, but as Dalwai tells 'CNN Marketplace Africa' this didn't hold them back: "We realised that there were many individuals and other institutions in and around Cape Town that could really help us."

The tech startup ecosystem

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The Open Medicine project is headquartered at the Cape Innovation and Technology Initiative, the Bandwidth Barn, one of many resources in Cape Town where tech entrepreneurs are trying to bring their ideas to fruition.

CEO of the Bandwidth Barn, Ian Merrington explains the initiative to the programme: "We provide a space for startups but we also provide support programmes to accelerate those startups. We do enterprise development and we address the skills shortage in the IT industry."

Several successful Cape Town tech startups have been acquired by global companies in recent years including the deal site Twangoo which was purchased by Groupon in 2011.

One of Twangoo's founders, Daniel Guasco, is now the CEO of Groupon South Africa. Guasco also heads the Silicon Cape Initiative - inspired by the US tech enclave Silicon Valley - which has over 9,000 members and aims to improve the tech startup environment in the Western Cape. Guasco tells the programme: "its initiatives like Silicon Cape that obviously supports and creates awareness for these startups and creates a real ecosystem around what's happening in the startup space."

Investing in tech and tech startups will yield positive results

Vernon Thaver, chief technology officer for Cisco Systems in South Africa agrees that today's tech investment in South Africa will yield positive results in the future.

In the 'FaceTime' interview of 'Marketplace Africa' he tells Asher: "Investing in broadband, high-speed capacity networks, mobile networks, is really a down payment on the future... The beauty of mobile technology, of broadband, is the ability to create new jobs, and create multiplication factors of productivity."

Cisco Systems, which has offices in 10 countries across the continent, is developing broadband infrastructure in Africa helping more people get better access to the web. Thaver goes into more detail with Asher: "Today we have 16 submarine cables that cover all of Africa, and that has led to a drop, a huge drop, in retail prices on the internet. And the consumer,

the average man on the street, he's seeing the benefit."

Vernon Thaver

Thaver's strategy for investment in infrastructure comes from a belief in the power of the web, telling 'Marketplace Africa': "We're at the cusp now... As multiple devices, or millions and billions of devices are connected to the internet, we create what is called the "Global Brain." And Africa's not excluded. The new value, the new business models, the new propositions, the new companies that we are originating, will be people that can take this data, understand it, process it."

As companies like The Open Medicine Project benefit from the investment and the growing tech community in South Africa, Khan is clear of the benefits his country offers: "I don't think, had we been housed anywhere else in South Africa, we would have nearly the success we've had here. There's such density of expertise in the sectors that were required to make our company successful. Our company is a combination of insights and ideas from all those areas mashed up to produce really great solutions for our city."

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