ECONOMIC PROPECTS AND DIGITAL CHALLENGES

“We are very optimistic about Africa’s potential: our company has based part of its organic growth in this continent”

AIS Group



Photography: "Moving Shadows", Girma Berta

What does AIS do?

AIS Group is a Catalan company founded in 1987 that specialises in transforming data into useful knowledge for optimal decision-making. We are experts in analysing data and building models with this data to predict and/or optimise processes. We focus on artificial intelligence (AI) techniques such as machine learning for business areas such as marketing, production planning, logistics and human resources in sectors like retail, industry or health. Our strong growth and internationalisation arise mainly from applying AI to credit risk management for financial institutions. It is precisely this kind of solution that is fuelling our growth on the African continent.

What strategy have you followed for internationalising in sub-Saharan Africa?

The key was a first project in which we were advised by ACCIÓ's office in Washington. Their team helped us prepare a tender for the World Bank in Morocco, which we were finally awarded in 2012. Subsequently, we won further projects with the African Development Bank in Ivory Coast, which brought us increased visibility for projects and initiatives on the African continent. We obtained our first references thanks to these multilateral organisations, and they have been very useful for winning other operations directly with private and public banks in the continent and doing business in a growing number of countries.

What is your experience in this region?

As is always the case when entering a new market, a lot of work is required. Starting in Morocco proved to be a good first step for building our strategy. Although it must be said that we have found significant differences compared with previous international experiences. For example, one of the solutions we offer financial institutions is a system for assessing loan applications from individuals and companies, and in many African countries, we have found that there is a serious lack of data. Some do not even have a unique identifier for individuals or companies, or do not have a property registry. It's quite a challenge.

What would you highlight about the African market?

Africa is always an opportunity, but you have to be aware of each country's specific features, which reveal very different realities. For example, Morocco is clearly leading development on the continent, in spite of being a small market. West Africa has a certain harmony because of its French-speaking past and, for example, all eight countries operate under the umbrella of the same regulator in the WAEMU zone. However, in the English-speaking region, each country has its own idiosyncrasies and regulations and this limits certain activities. In our field of business, Kenya stands out as particularly dynamic in mobile banking. Lastly, there is the MENA zone, specifically the Mediterranean countries, which are another group with which the European Union is currently making effort to help consolidate their economies. It is also important to ensure that the political context guarantees stability, and also to be aware of the regulatory and economic barriers for each sector. But we are very optimistic about Africa's potential and AIS Group has based part of the company's organic growth in this continent.

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AIS – Artificial Intelligence Applications, S.A. is a strategic, financial and technological consulting company with international operations. Their specialty is generating value from data through artificial intelligence techniques, business intelligence and technology so that their clients achieve their goals. To do this, AIS Group relies on the creation of decision-making support systems based on statistical modeling for forecasting and mathematics for optimization, as well as the use of Big Data and Machine Learning techniques.