

Facebook chief product officer inspired by West Africa developers

DAKAR, Senegal - Chris Cox, chief product officer at Facebook, wrapped up his visit to West Africa last week and will be taking feedback and inspiration from the developer and content creator communities back to California following his visits to Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal.



Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology (MEST) in Accra, Ghana

Cox was in West Africa to find out how the region's creatives, developers and entrepreneurs are using Facebook and Instagram to bring their passions to life.

"It's been an inspiring week meeting with some of the top artists, publishers, entrepreneurs, developers, and social media stars across the region. This is a region that creates some of the most interesting cultures in the world – from food, to fashion, to music, to art.

"They are at the leading edge of using mobile technology to build communities in their cities, countries, and around the region, and in solving local problems with local solutions. We left inspired, and with insights on the real challenges we have to improve our services -- from internet connectivity to more regional support and tools," Cox said.

Cox started his trip with Femi Kuti live on stage at the New Afrika Shrine in Lagos. Cox, who is an accomplished pianist, was invited to play live on stage with Kuti, an experience he will never forget. As he explained: "It was an honour to play live

with one of my musical heroes. The Shrine is one of the great institutions in music history and in the political history of the region. It was also the first time a concert has been live broadcast on Facebook from The Shrine.

“Femi’s team was inspired by how many folks around the city, the region, and the world wanted to tune in, and we were too. We were surprised by how many Nigerians told us how exciting it was to see a concert from there. We think there’s a great opportunity for Live to give the whole world a window into some of these gems of local culture.”

Social Media Week: Lagos

Whilst he was in Nigeria he spoke at Social Media Week Lagos — the region’s premier new media and social media conference — and Cox highlighted Nigeria’s status as a hub for innovation and creativity because of its fast-growing mobile technology sector and its vibrant film and music industries.

He focused on how the world is moving to digital video, with formats such as virtual reality, Live video broadcast and 360 video giving people new ways to tell their stories.

Cox then travelled to Ghana where he visited the Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology (MEST) in Accra, Ghana. MEST, a start-up-school and incubator in Ghana, brings in some of the top aspiring tech entrepreneurs and engineers from around the continent to develop their businesses. During his visit Cox met the team from [Asoriba](#), a software for church. He talked with the founders of Asoriba about how technology can be used to strengthen communities.

Later in Ghana he witnessed the force of Ghana’s creative talent in an event at ANO Gallery, which was co-hosted by ANO Gallery and Bless The Mic. During the event, some of Ghana’s top talent spoke about how they have used technology to tell their stories and grow their audiences.

Ghanaian musician M.anifest said, “We have some really compelling stories to share in Ghana, not just with other Ghanaians but with audiences around the world. The remarkable thing about Facebook is that it gives us cutting-edge and exciting new ways to connect with people and to tell our stories ourselves and in our own way.”

The last stop of the trip was Senegal where Cox attended a 'Stories of Senegal' event, designed to lift the lid on the stories, cultures and talent in Senegal. During the event, top Dakar chef Corinne Erambert of Les Atelier De Corinne gave Chris Cox a crash course in local Senegalese cooking, teaching him how to make local dish, couscous rice. The event was live streamed on Facebook.

For the final stop of his visit to West Africa, Cox attended an event with local tech entrepreneurs where he took part in a discussion about building tech products in Francophone Africa.

Concluded Cox: “It was exciting and inspiring to see how technology is giving entrepreneurs and content creators across West Africa new opportunities to reach their audiences. I felt privileged to see how developers, content creators and entrepreneurs are using Facebook and Instagram to help solve local problems or tell local stories.”

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