

Beat: Technology

Johnson & Johnson Names Winners of First Africa Innovation Challenge

Support Africa's vibrant innovation

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USPA NEWS - Johnson & Johnson (www.JNJ.com) today named the winners of the first Africa Innovation Challenge at the Global Entrepreneurship Congress. The initiative, which received nearly 500 submissions from innovators and entrepreneurs across the continent, sought the best ideas for new, sustainable health so

Johnson & Johnson (www.JNJ.com) today named the winners of the first Africa Innovation Challenge at the Global Entrepreneurship Congress. The initiative, which received nearly 500 submissions from innovators and entrepreneurs across the continent, sought the best ideas for new, sustainable health solutions that will benefit African communities. The Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies comprises the world's largest healthcare business and its presence in Africa dates back to 1930, including business operations, public health programs and corporate citizenship. The Africa Innovation Challenge is part of the company's comprehensive approach to collaborate with and support Africa's vibrant innovation, education and health systems institutions.

In addition to the Africa Innovation Challenge winners, the company also announced today that it is a major partner of Women in Innovation and the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa, programs that seek to substantially increase the number of women on the continent working in the sciences. These announcements follow the prior week's opening of two new Johnson & Johnson regional offices in Ghana and Kenya, which along with our South Africa-based global public health headquarters, will support health system strengthening and public health programs.

"Africa is one of the fastest growing regions of the world, and Johnson & Johnson is proud to support this growth through strong collaborations that encourage innovation and accelerate advancements in the continent's health systems," said Paul Stoffels, M.D., Chief Scientific Officer, Johnson & Johnson. "We are seeing a surge of activity among entrepreneurs and health system leaders to develop important solutions that overcome longstanding health and societal challenges. By working together, we hope to bring meaningful solutions to patients and consumers more rapidly, to help cultivate the next generation of scientists, and to support Africa's entrepreneurial base."

Africa innovation challenge

The Africa Innovation Challenge, launched in November 2016, solicited novel ideas with a focus on three critical health areas: promoting early child development and maternal health; empowering young women; and improving family well-being. The three winning concepts embraced these themes as well as the goal of creating ongoing, sustainable businesses:

Project Agateka (Burundi) "The development of a sustainable solution to support girls who are unable to afford menstrual pads and underwear is an important need for young women. Project Agateka will provide a direct health solution as well as the opportunity for women and girls to generate income in Burundi. With the inclusion of health information, the initiative also provides health education to support improved sexual and reproductive health.

Project Kernel Fresh (Liberia) "Project Kernel Fresh sources natural palm kernels from smallholder women farmers, increasing their income. The entrepreneur cold presses the palm kernel oil to be used in organic cosmetics. The project will also create jobs for young women by training them to sell the products throughout Liberia.

Project Pedal Tap (Uganda) "Seeking to prevent disease transmission, and a reduction of water use, Project Pedal Tap will develop hands-free solutions for hand water taps in Uganda. The entrepreneurs will create manufacturing capabilities, using mostly recycled materials, which will lead to an ongoing business.

"This was an extremely difficult competition to judge as there were many terrific ideas," said Josh Ghaim, Chief Technology Officer, Johnson & Johnson Consumer Inc. "The three winning projects demonstrated a strong benefit to local communities and the ability to empower young women, and they also have the potential to deliver ongoing economic support. We look forward to working with these entrepreneurs over the course of the next year to help them build sustainable operations."

Each of the three winning recipients will receive funding as well as mentorship from scientists, engineers, and operations members from the Johnson & Johnson Consumer Research & Development organization and other areas of the company.

Supporting women in science and innovation careers Globally there is significant gender inequality in the sciences. To help address this, Johnson & Johnson has made a strong commitment to increase the number of Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, Manufacturing and Design (WISTEM2D) careers. Last year, the company entered into 10 partnerships with institutions around the world to accelerate the development of WISTEM2D careers and supported other STEM initiatives globally.

With the sponsorship of Women in Innovation (WiIN), and through the collaboration with the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA), the company expands its WISTEM2D commitment to Africa, where gender inequality in science and innovation careers mirrors gaps found around the world-----

WiIN is a new mentoring program that will reach 1,000 female college graduates in Rwanda and provide them with communication leadership skills and encourage them to pursue a career in the sciences. The pilot program, which will begin in 2017 and seeks to expand to other African countries, will provide week-long, comprehensive instruction and mentorship to recent women college graduates on how to pursue and maintain a career in the sciences.-----

The AESA collaboration, which launched this month, will promote and accelerate the development of Africa’s research leadership, scientific excellence and innovation by encouraging and supporting WISTEM2D education and career development for young people, particularly females across the continent. The initiative will include entrepreneurial mentorship and internship programs for early career researchers, challenges, and other innovation initiatives. Throughout the year, employee volunteers from the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies will work with AESA to host WISTEM2D workshops and courses geared toward coaching scientific leadership and promoting entrepreneurship and innovation in Africa. AFRICAN MILLENNIALS AND ENTREPRENEURS REPRESENT SOME OF THE BEST TALENT IN THE WORLD “African millennials and entrepreneurs represent some of the best talent in the world. Our presence at the Global Entrepreneurs Congress here in Johannesburg and other Africa based conferences like the Next Einstein Forum, programs like the Africa Innovation Challenge, and partnerships with organizations like Women in Innovation and the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa reflect our confidence in Africa’s women and men and their potential to change the world through innovation,” said Seema Kumar, Vice President, Innovation, Global Health, and Policy Communication.

NEW REGIONAL OPERATIONS IN GHANA AND KENYA-----

The new regional offices in Accra, Ghana and Nairobi, Kenya represent a novel approach to how Johnson & Johnson seeks to develop partnerships, products and service delivery models that address neglected and emerging health issues. Teams from the company’s consumer, medical device, pharmaceutical, global public health and Global Community Impact (GCI) groups will be located in a central office in each country, helping to bring an integrated approach to improving health outcomes in the region.

“The expansion of our companies’ operations in Africa allows Johnson & Johnson to continue to build innovative, collaborative opportunities that meet a variety of market needs, including developing new pharmaceutical products, service delivery approaches and advocacy for health issues impacting vulnerable communities,” said Alma Scott, Head of Africa Operations and Partnerships, Global Public Health. “Through regional engagement with health delivery partners, we seek to support locally-executable programs that drive health impact.”

About Johnson & Johnson in Africa

The Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies have a strong legacy in Africa. More than 80 years ago, South Africa was selected as the company’s third overseas location and has steadily expanded its footprint in Africa to 27 countries. Today, Johnson & Johnson operates three manufacturing plants and employs more than 1,500 employees in Africa who serve the region’s diverse health needs through our consumer, commercial, global public health and corporate citizenship programs.

Through innovation, collaboration and local engagement we are:

- Cultivating Africa’s innovation through health technology hubs;
- Expanding R&D skills and capacity among African scientists;
- Catalyzing healthcare infrastructure investments;
- Enhancing collaboration with local health delivery partners;
- Boosting education and training resources for healthcare workers;
- Empowering African youth to thrive and become drivers of change;
- Improving access to medicines.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com