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Innovative digital health solutions from Africa at the center of a new partnership between Austria and the Continent of Opportunities

From solar-powered hearing aids to digital emergency platforms and cloud-based hospitals, creative startups across Africa are developing disruptive digital health solutions. Austria has recognized these entrepreneurial opportunities and — together with renowned partner organizations — is enabling their professionalization and upscaling as part of the *Kofi Annan Award for Innovation in Africa* launched by the Austrian Federal Chancellery.

The Republic of Austria started a partnership dialogue several years ago with a focus on economic cooperation and digital innovation involving the private sector.

330 applications from 38 African countries demonstrate Africa's enormous entrepreneurial potential in the health sector. A characteristic feature of the nine finalist teams of the *Kofi Annan Award for Innovation in Africa* is the high proportion (about 50%) of female founders and employees, all of whom are working to overcome the bottlenecks and supply gaps on the African continent with ingenious platform solutions. In addition to concrete support from a strong network of Africa-experienced companies, investors and institutions, the three awardees will each receive 250,000 euros and long-term mentoring, networking opportunities as well as high international visibility. The Kofi Annan Award Ceremony will take place in early July 2022.

Achieving the goals of the UN Agenda 2030 with ingenious digital innovations

The lack of doctors, pharmacies, laboratories or hospitals in rural areas; the long distances; the lack of emergency services; or the lack of financial resources— all these issues pose major challenges to health systems on the African continent. The innovative power of the most promising nine social entrepreneurs of the *Kofi Annan Award for Innovation in Africa* is enormous. During an intensive five-day boot camp, hosted by the *World Food Programme Innovation Accelerator* as an Award partner, the potential of the startups was clearly demonstrated.

"The range and quality of the participating startup teams and the solutions presented are impressive. It is important to scale them up through targeted support," said Antonella Mei-Pochtler, who is leading the Award on behalf of the Austrian Federal Chancellery as co-chair of the jury. The finalists, who come from 38 countries, address various aspects of healthcare:

Securing basic medical care

Within minutes, [Flare](#) in Kenya puts you in touch with an emergency team and sends help. This solution has so far saved over 10,000 acute patients and enabled the safe delivery of 4,000 children. More than 1.2 million people already use the 24/7 app in Kenya. [Talamus](#) provides end-to-end patient care in Ghana and Nigeria. More than 50 clinics, 80 pharmacies and 180 labs are connected through an interface. The startup is now aiming to enter the Zimbabwean healthcare market.

Secure medication supply

With a pharmacy network, Mauritius-based [Lifestores Healthcare](#) streamlines procurement for more than 500 members. This lowers the cost of essential medicines and combats counterfeit trade. Plans call for expansion into Nigeria and Kenya. The Zimbabwean verification service [Vaxiglobal](#)'s use of contactless biometrics for vaccine deliveries minimizes resource wastage, improves data quality and enables the scaling up of vaccination campaigns in developing countries. Already 320,000 users are registered.

Telemedicine for long distances

[GeroCare](#), a cloud-based hospital, already serves 160,000 elderly people in 52 cities in Nigeria. This segment of the population comprises 13.6 million people who could potentially be served by the platform. GeroCare now aims to integrate insurers and financial partners in their solution. Through a simple short code for all cell phones (*280#), [Rocket Health](#) helps approximately four million chronically ill people in Uganda. The startup is enjoying great success with its online doctor consultations and home delivery of medicines.

Prevention with solar power and digitization

With its mobile hearing test, mDREET from [Deaftronics](#) in Botswana is revolutionizing the hearing screening sector. The immediate goal is to test three million children between the ages of two and six. In cases of impairment, affordable, solar-powered hearing aids are used—a revolutionary idea, relevant for the whole world. With myPaddi from [MoBicure](#), 100,000 young people in Nigeria already have discreet access to sexual health counseling. Their app helps address sexual abuse, prevent teen pregnancy or HIV infection. Mental health services at affordable prices are offered by the [Shezlong](#) online platform in Egypt. It currently reaches around 70,000 people. Around 65% of users are Arabic-speaking women. Online sessions can be booked from anywhere and at any time. The service will soon be expanded to South Africa.

A high-class jury will select three winning teams from these finalists. These will then be awarded prizes at a ceremony in Vienna in early July.

Attractive area of growth and cooperation potential for Austria's economy

The Award shines a spotlight on Africa's enormous entrepreneurial potential in the healthcare sector and prepares the ground for long-term partnerships between Austrian and African companies. A broad-based expert network of committed business leaders, industry experts, investors and mentors with a connection to Africa is actively driving networking forward. With this, the Supporter Network aims to establish a lasting support and cooperation platform for Africa beyond this year's Award ceremony.

Factsheet, timeline, photos, infographics and videos on the *Kofi Annan Award for Innovation in Africa* are available in the [Media Corner of the website](#).

Further inquiry note:

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