Selected E-Health Start-ups from East and West Africa

From the showcasing series “Digital Innovation Made in Africa”
Digital Innovation Made in Africa
For Sustainable and Inclusive Development
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E-Health is more than a simple transition from analog to digital services. Telemedicine, online health information systems, integrated databases, digital logistics, clinic platforms and many more digital solutions enable access to health services for millions. Delivered via mobile or smart phone, drones or mobile health containers, e-Health solutions help to reduce inequality in healthcare services, and to reach out to remote, rural or poor areas.

Many e-Health solutions are created by dynamic young African innovators. Their knowledge about local needs combined with international expertise and digital ingenuity, highlights the African creativity. Innovative entrepreneurs know their local markets and understand the social context. This gives them a competitive advantage that helps them develop “Digital Innovation Made in Africa” and to assert themselves on the market globally.

This brochure presents a selection of these innovations. They represent numerous new developments that convey a completely new image of Africa: dynamic, modern, innovative, technical, and at the same time human – because behind every digital innovation there is a team of founders who are keen to combine socially responsible entrepreneurship with digital modernization.

We would like to express our special thanks to the technology start-ups shown, whose creativity and commitment make them role models for an entire generation of young people worldwide.

Dr. Jan Schwaab
Head of Programme
Tech Entrepreneurship Initiative ‘Make-IT in Africa’
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
E-Health as a major contribution of digital innovation made in Africa

In the future, Sub-Saharan Africa will face dramatic challenges either due to demographic change, the explosive spread of affluent diseases or the spread of infectious diseases caused by increasing mobility. At the same time, the well-known problems such as poor access to information and healthcare in rural areas are still in place. E-Health technologies will not solve these problems on their own, but they can offer opportunities to creatively address these challenges. In this context, most concepts aim at a more efficient use of existing resources and the integration of patients in quality-assured treatment and care concepts.

The 20 start-ups presented on the following pages show that a significant change can be made: solving technical problems, providing medical infrastructure, facilitating medical access or improving medical knowledge. Especially in the field of healthcare, small innovations can have a major impact. The high distribution of mobile phones for example, allows communication about health prevention in a way that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. In the future, these inexpensive applications can have a significant impact in resolving healthcare challenges in many regions.

The project ‘Make-IT in Africa’ promotes digital innovation for sustainable and inclusive development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) implements this project on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as part of BMZ’s Digital Africa Initiative.

In close collaboration with more than 20 corporate and financing partners, social enterprises, hubs and networks, ‘Make-IT in Africa’ supports an enabling environment for young tech entrepreneurs.

In its showcasing series ‘Digital Innovation Made in Africa’, the project presents good practices from African tech entrepreneurs with a high potential for social impact.

More information and contact: https://make-it-in-africa.org/
Access to Healthcare
Afya-Plan

Kenya

**Short description**

Afya-Plan is an e-health start-up that provides a group-savings platform to help micro-savings groups pool resources to meet the cost of healthcare for themselves and their families.

**Problem statement**

Although health insurance plays an important social role, its distribution in large parts of East Africa is virtually non-existent.

**Solution**

Afya-Plan is a platform where micro-savings groups can save for healthcare by making simple weekly or monthly M-Pesa transactions. The savings in their accounts are then used to pay for their healthcare. It is also possible to get loans from the platform which are paid directly to a health facility to cater for the bill.

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ClinicPesa

Uganda

Short description
ClinicPesa provides access to healthcare financing for the uninsured in East Africa. Their offers are more affordable than the traditional insurance models.

Problem statement
More than 80 million people in East Africa are without affordable health insurance and therefore without healthcare.

Solution
ClinicPesa tries to fill the gap between healthcare and uninsured with an affordable and accessible mobile healthcare platform. The platform provides digital micro-savings and loans for setting aside small sums. In addition, the platform funds used to offset medical bills and purchase drugs in times of need at any registered clinic, hospital or pharmacy.

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Short description
A technology and real-estate start-up operating an online marketplace for healthcare, providing short-term health-care facility rentals, thus enabling health professionals to start private practice with ease.

Problem statement
The Nigerian population faces limited access to healthcare in general. A special problem is that healthcare professionals often struggle to find affordable facilities to treat their patients.

Solution
With Doctoora, health professionals can establish virtual private practices by leveraging short term facility rentals. After the verification process, health professionals within the network have on-demand access to rentable workspaces and a practice management platform that enables them to keep track of their work. The start-up aims to improve medical supplies for doctors and healthcare workers to improve the quality of the services they provide to patients. With Doctoora, Nigerian doctors will meet international medical standards and support Nigeria in achieving positive health outcomes.

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Kaaro Health

Uganda

Short description
Kaaro Health provides rural health facilities with remote access to doctors and specialists so that women in rural communities do not have to walk long distances to access healthcare.

Problem statement
In Uganda, more than 75% of all private healthcare facilities are located in major urban areas. 80% of the population lives outside urban areas and have therefore limited access to healthcare.

Solution
Kaaro Health aims to finance healthcare facilities to support rural healthcare entrepreneurs. They supply healthcare SMEs with financing instruments they need to expand their operations into new underserved areas. Their work helps to provide more sophisticated medical equipment in rural areas. Therefore, Kaaro Health provides targeted financial management training to current and prospective clients so they have the skills they need to grow and sustain their businesses. Their advisory services prepare healthcare SMEs with growth potential to qualify for financing and to mitigate the risk of lending to these businesses.

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CardioPad

Cameroon

**Short description**

CardioPad is a medical instrument used to record and analyze heart activity of a patient in an effort to provide a medical diagnosis. This gadget aims to reduce mortality of cardiovascular diseases in developing countries.

**Problem statement**

In most African regions outside of cities, hospitals and medical facilities are scarce. In Cameroon for example, there are reportedly 50 cardiovascular specialists for a population of 20 million.

**Solution**

CardioPad enables remote examinations by leveraging tele-medicine. CardioPad allows doctors to remotely communicate with their patients by all the parameters for an electrocardiogram, including the heart rate, blood pressure and respiration. All patient data is then transmitted over a mobile network to a doctor. An initial diagnosis can be made based on the data and a decision can be made on whether or not the patient needs to go to a hospital urgently. For check-ups and monitoring for cardiac patients, the efficiency of the CardioPad can absorb a large burden for the Cameroonian healthcare system by decentralizing such procedures to community health workers.

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Short description
HearScreen is an app that performs clinically valid hearing tests. These tests allow early detection of hearing loss, allowing appropriate treatments and a higher chance of recovery.

Problem statement
Hearing problems can go undetected in children for many years and affect their learning outcomes and wellbeing. While 32 million children worldwide suffer from hearing impairment, the World Health Organisation estimates that 60% of childhood hearing loss could be prevented.

Solution
The “hearScreen” app, developed in South Africa, provides clinically valid hearing tests while capturing and managing data that is reviewed by an audiologist. Given the expense of traditional hearing screenings, hearScreen is a healthcare solution driven by community-based access. Healthcare workers can administer the test and the results are sent via SMS and email to parents. For children whose results suggest they need a referral to an audiologist, hearScreen links parents with local healthcare providers. Originating at the University of Pretoria, the app is now used in over 35 countries to diagnose hearing loss among children. Almost 40,000 tests have been conducted with the app and over 7,000 children have been referred to specialists to find solutions to their hearing loss or to prevent further deterioration.

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Micrive Infinite

Kenya

**Short description**

Micrive Infinite works in close partnership with surgeons to provide 3D printing services. Products range from patient-specific anatomically accurate models to surgical guides. The main areas they cover are reconstructive surgeries following trauma, tumors, and congenital conditions. The primary specialties targeted are Maxillofacial, Orthopedic and Neurosurgery. Others include paediatric surgery, ENT, and forensic pathology.

**Problem statement**

The specific challenges facing reconstructive surgeries are late presentations of congenital and developmental conditions, residual defects, post treatment complications, lengthy procedures, and high costs. In addition, the severe shortage of facilities and qualified personnel to attend to the patients are increasing challenges.

**Solution**

Incorporating 3D printing in the treatment planning phase of the surgical work improves success rates, reduces complications, is cost effective and encourages a positive patient experience. Micrive Infinite works in partnerships and close contact with surgeons to create life-size patient-specific, and anatomically accurate models. These are representative of areas of concern for each patient.

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Short description

oPerception allows visually impaired people to find their belongings by scanning the surroundings via a mobile camera.

Problem statement

In the course of reducing social barriers, oPerception aims to minimalize healthcare costs for people with vision impairments.

Solution

oPerception is an intelligent mobile application that allows visually-impaired people to find personal belongings by scanning the surroundings in real-time using an object detection algorithm, that works both online and offline. This algorithm was pre-tested on common use cases like classifying vegetables, fruits, blind stick, etc. If the user is searching for a mobile device, the app will notify him/her about its location. Particularly, the app supports both voice-based interface and touch-based interface that is adapted for the visually impaired people.

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Short description
PreDiagn creates access to mobile-based diagnostic tests from onboarded medical laboratories at a fraction of the cost for individuals...

Problem statement
The high cost of healthcare is especially magnified in the diagnostic services segment. Laboratory services are a necessity to create good diagnostics, but they significantly drive up prices.

Solution
PreDiagn is an on-demand platform that uses internet technology to create shared access to discounted diagnostic tests/panels at on-boarded medical laboratories for users, thereby guaranteeing affordability and accessibility of healthcare services.

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RedHunt
Kenya

**Short description**
RedHunt enables medical practitioners and the public to search for and locate blood types they need from different hospitals.

**Problem statement**
A lot of deaths and serious complications occur in Kenyan hospitals due to a lack of blood for transfusion during emergencies, births, and medical emergencies, even when a nearby hospital has the required blood.

**Solution**
A digital database to keep track of and provide easy access to blood reservoirs. RedHunt provides an application where hospitals sign up and put their blood repositories online so that at any given time, anyone (medical practitioner or member of the public) can access the data and know exactly which hospital to take their patient to or to get the required blood from.

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Ask Without Shame
Uganda

Short description
The app “Ask Without Shame” provides accurate information about all topics related to sex with its anonymous text message service and hotline straight into the hands of young people in Uganda.

Problem statement
In Africa, embarrassment and fear prevent the majority of adolescents from seeking information about sexual health services and contraception because speaking about sex is considered a taboo.

Solution
Ask Without Shame is providing emergency sex education to youth via mobile to improve and promote sexual health by giving accurate information. It is a free and anonymous service to answer questions regarding sexual matters without judgment via the Ask Without Shame android App, SMS, WhatsApp, and a toll free line. Medical experts assist youth with the right information regarding your emergency, questions about sex, HIV, STDs, body changes, contraception, pregnancy and anything related to sexuality. Due to high mobile phone coverage in Uganda, more than 70000 questions from over 35,000 users have been answered since launch in 2015.

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**Problem statement**

The problem of maternal and infant deaths persists in Africa. This is mainly due to lack of information and inadequate knowledge channels. As a result, there is a lot of misinformation about health and a populace that are generally distrusting of their healthcare providers.

**Solution**

GiftedMom is a social enterprise that helps to bridge this gap by using digital technologies to improve access to maternal and pediatric healthcare. Its innovative platform is a modern digital infrastructure for the distribution of health services. The service uses SMS and voice messaging to deliver stage-based and customized notifications for pregnant women and new mothers, with information on antenatal appointments and newborn vaccines.
**Short description**

IRIS provides a simple user interface using a chat bot application to enable adolescents to seek and acquire healthcare information.

**Problem statement**

Out of 4 individuals, 1 will experience a mental health problem at one point in their life. Depressive disorders alone were ranked as the third leading cause of the global burden of disease in 2004 and will move into first place by 2030. With stigma, existing work and societal pressures, there is a need to promote mental wellbeing.

**Solution**

Ushauri is a chat bot application embedded in Facebook messenger that promotes mental health and wellbeing. The platform provides information about wellness, peer support, and access, as well as follow-up to medical support.

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Mamalette is an early stage social enterprise that focuses on improving health outcomes for pregnant women and new mothers who are vulnerable or socially marginalized while simultaneously providing employment opportunities for Mamalette in Nigeria.

**Problem statement**

Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest rate of maternal and infant mortality. According to UNICEF, a woman’s chance of dying from pregnancy and childbirth in Nigeria is 1 in 13. The same occurs for many other African countries. One of the underlying causes of the high maternal and infant mortality in Nigeria is the limited availability of timely and reliable health information for decision-making as well as poor access to and use of health facilities. In addition, there remains a lack of collective community knowledge on healthy pregnancy and infant care.

**Solution**

Mamalette connects pregnant women and new mothers to proven and evidence-based life-saving information through an active online community and a network of motherhood support groups in communities across Nigeria. The platform of Mamalette is setup to provide advisory support to expectant mothers, healthcare givers, and other stakeholders in the primary healthcare system.

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MOBicure
Nigeria

Problem statement
In Nigeria, child and maternal mortality is among the highest in the world. According to UNICEF, every single day Nigeria loses 2,300 children under five years and 145 women of childbearing age.

Solution
The “Omomi” app (meaning ‘my child’ in the Yoruba dialect) wants to help reducing mortality using a web platform and SMS for information on maternal and child health. Based on the WHO and UNICEF Childhood Survival Strategies, Omomi delivers medically accurate information to mothers on a variety of health issues. The app allows them to track their child’s growth and immunisations and to manage infant health issues, such as diarrhoea, which alone accounts for 10% of child deaths in sub-Saharan Africa. As of 2016, Omomi has gathered almost 30,000 users.

Instead of relying entirely on online outreach, Omomi also leverages community health ambassadors to introduce pregnant women and mothers to the app and SMS service, and hosts community health events in hard-to-reach communities.

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Slide Safe
Nigeria

Short description
Slide Safe raises awareness on sexual safety among young Nigerians by creating a platform for open and honest communication about healthy sexual relationships, and discreet sale and delivery of sexual health products.

Problem statement
The stigmatization of sexually transmitted diseases and sexual safety still poses a problem to provide accessible information on safer sex and sexual health products. This occurs especially for sexually transmitted diseases. Open access to health services and a quick response rate for testing and countermeasures is indispensable.

Solution
Slide Safe provides online access to sexual health service, providing information about safer sex and discreetly distributing sexual health products to customers.

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ClinicMaster is an integrated healthcare information management and medical billing software. It automates patient transactions in the clinic or hospital per visit.

**Problem statement**
Patients are frustrated by the long queues and high turn around time at health facilities. It is cumbersome for health workers to retrieve the data of their patients and generate reports from manual files. This results in delayed and inaccurate generation of bills and the inability to properly manage drug inventory.

**Solution**
An integrated healthcare information management and medical billing system.

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Short description
LifeBank is a platform that makes blood available when and where it is needed in Nigeria to save lives by mobilizing blood donations, taking inventory of all blood available in the country, and delivering blood in the right condition to the recipient.

Problem statement
Specifically in Nigeria, both public and private hospitals are overcrowded and inefficient. Health workers are overworked and spend valuable time chasing after essential medical products. The lack of essential medical products leads to significant preventable deaths.

Solution
LifeBank is the smart supply chain engine for Africa’s health system. We use technology, big data, and smart logistics to improve access to essential medical supplies and save lives in hospitals across Africa. We are the engine of this continent’s economic growth. We help hospitals discover medical products using next generation technology and big data for predictive experience, and we deliver to hospitals in the right condition using a smart logistics system.

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Usalama Tech Group
Ghana

**Short description**

Health Usalama is a platform that links victims of emergencies to emergency service providers in a fast and efficient manner using real time data and an integrated web-based response portal.

**Problem statement**

Safety is an issue in many Kenyan cities. People feel better knowing that they are well prepared for an emergency. Especially in the stressful situations, it can be complicated to organize help quickly.

**Contact**

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**Short description**

Sutures is a digital toolkit, which allowing surgeons to explain surgical procedures via a highly interactive anatomy workspace.

**Problem statement**

Irrespective of circumstances, surgeons must adapt and deliver efficient information to patients, trainees, and colleagues.

**Solution**

Their app 'gamifies' the main organs of the body so that medical students and surgeons can see what they are going to do. Their app includes an interactive anatomy, where organ shapes and interactions are designed to enhance their understanding. In ‘Surgery Actions Mode’, users can cut, connect, and close at high range of freedom to experience the logic of surgery. In ‘Editor Mode’, users can take snapshots and add drawings, text or stickers at each step of the process.

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The Social-Digital Innovation Initiative (SDI) is a non-profit company committed to creating a world where social solutions use technologies meaningfully, are impact driven, sustainable and benefit and belong to those who create them. SDI builds bridges for collaboration between technology and communities worldwide, supports cross-pollination and excels in empowering grassroots to create socially relevant, feasible, financially sustainable social-tech enterprises. We bring tech and social entrepreneurship together, incubate pre-seed projects in a non-profit, non-equity, independent development program. Our modular offerings are designed in collaboration with local partners and flexibly to fit the local context.

For more information, visit: www.endeva.org

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**Co-Creation Hub Nigeria**

CcHUB is a social innovation centre dedicated to accelerating the application of social capital and technology for economic prosperity. The technology hub is the first in Nigeria to serve as an Open Living Lab in which user-driven innovation is fully integrated in the co-creative process of new services, products and societal infrastructures.

CcHUB’s methodology is hinged on engaging a community of progressive stakeholders (end-users, subject matter experts, government agencies, businesses, academics, civil societies etc.) who bring their creativity and knowledge to play in co-creating solutions to social challenges faced by the average Nigerian through our open living labs. The resulting innovations are then supported to become sustainable market solutions by providing proactive business support, advice, mentorship and funding through our pre-incubation & research unit.

For more information, visit: www.cchubnigeria.com

**betterplace lab**

In the betterplace lab, we research how digital technologies can be (better) used for social purposes. We give answer to this question through studies and research trips, and spread knowledge and inspire discussion and innovation through capacity building programs and events on the ground.

More information and contact: www.betterplace-lab.org

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**endeva**

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Social-Digital Innovation Initiative

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For more information, visit: https://sdinnovation.org

Konnektiv

Konnektiv is a Berlin-based agency working at the intersection of technology, collaboration, and social development. We focus on new innovative approaches for international development in the field of information and communication technology (ICT). We design, manage, and evaluate development projects in the ICT sector, advise on digital strategy and portfolio management, provide training and facilitation, conduct research and analysis, and program software solutions.

For more information, visit: https://konnektiv.de

Nailab

Nailab is a Kenyan startup incubator, located in Nairobi, that was founded in 2010. Nailab tries to lower the entry barriers for ICT entrepreneurs who want to start and scale their businesses in Kenya. Nailab was launched in 2011 by Nailab Ltd in partnership with the crowdfunding platform 1%CLUB.

For more information, visit: http://nailab.co.ke/
World Summit Awards (WSA)

The World Summit Awards are a unique awards system, selecting and promoting local digital innovation with high impact on improving society. Combining an ongoing series of international events and activities with a global network of start-ups, social entrepreneurs, mentors, jurors, speakers, experts, government leaders, academia and civil society, WSA is an international platform for cut edge examples on how ICTs can have an impact on society. Running 15 years by now, WSA has become a quality seal for digital content with societal impact in over 180 participating countries.

For more information, visit: https://sdinnovation.org

Make-IT in Africa

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In close collaboration with more than 20 corporate and financing partners, social enterprises, hubs and networks, ‘Make-IT in Africa’ supports an enabling environment for young tech entrepreneurs – to provide better access to finance, markets and skills.

More information and contact: www.make-it-in-africa.org

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

GIZ is a provider of international cooperation services for sustainable development and international education work. GIZ has over 50 years of experience in a wide variety of areas, including economic development and employment, energy and the environment, and peace and security. The diverse expertise of our federal enterprise is in demand around the globe, with the German Government, European Union institutions, the United Nations, the private sector and governments of other countries all benefiting from our services. We work with businesses, civil society actors and research institutions, fostering successful interaction between development policy and other policy fields and areas of activity. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is our main commissioning party.

For more information, visit: https://www.giz.de/
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