

First Johnson & Johnson Africa Innovation Challenge winners

Johnson & Johnson has announced the winners of the first Africa Innovation Challenge at the Global Entrepreneurship Congress today, 14 March 2017. 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.



Image source: J&J Africa on Twitter [@JNJAfrica](https://twitter.com/JNJAfrica)

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

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.

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.



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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. 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.

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