

# Startups represent Africa at Global Startup Awards 2019

Every year, the very best startups, most influential individuals and top ecosystem players such as investors, acceleration programmes and coworking spaces are selected from seven regions around the world - Nordics, South East Asia, Central Europe, SAARC Region (South Asia), Euro Asia, South Europe and Southern Africa - to compete in the Global Startup Awards.



This year, six companies represented the African continent in the categories of Startup of the Year, Best Newcomer, Founder of the Year, Investor of the Year, Best Co-working Space and Best Accelerator Programme, at the Grand Finale in China on Friday, 13 December 2019.

Charles Savage, founder of South African startup, Easy Equities, which competed in the category of Startup of the Year, said: "It's a great privilege to be representing the continent and one we are really excited about. Competing with global players gives us the incredible opportunity to learn, collaborate and have some fun whilst doing what we love - sharing our story and journey with the world."

He believes that the reason why African countries were represented in almost every category, bar two, is due to scarcity being a massive driver of innovation.

"I am a firm believer that for every problem there's an entrepreneurial opportunity waiting to be unlocked. Africa has lots of challenges to overcome and perhaps this drives us to be such effective innovators and entrepreneurs."

Savage predicts that the next 20 years will be defined by the African continent's growth story.

“Africa’s ability to leapfrog the technologies and infrastructure that held it back over the last few decades is being enabled by smarter and faster technologies empowering the continent to surpass global growth as it comes off a low base, with consumer demand for products and services still being largely unfulfilled.”

Pedro Ferreira, of CoWork Lab in Mozambique which was nominated as Best Co-working Space, concurred, adding: “I believe that the outlook for the continent is really good and that we should expect double-digit growth rates from many countries in Africa over the next decade.”

On being selected to participate in the Awards, he shared: “It feels great and it is a big honour to represent Africa in such a competition. Coworking spaces are relatively new on our continent and this will also be an opportunity to learn from our peers and to gain more knowledge and add more connections to our network.”

Ferreira’s advice for other African entrepreneurs is to study the market, utilise best case practices and take the first step. “The market exists and the continent needs entrepreneurs with tenacity and willingness to take that first step and persevere so they can reap the rewards later.”

Philip Kiracofe, CEO and co-founder of South African-based accelerator SBC AfriTech, one of the contenders in the Best Accelerator or Incubator category, maintains that Africa needs many more incubators and accelerators to help empower startups.

“We are happy to collaborate and share our best practices with anyone helping to grow tech and innovation hubs across the continent. Africa represents the most exciting growth opportunity for the rest of this century, and we say dive in and make an impact.”

He added, “We welcome more leading African companies to join us in launching new programmes that empower the next generation of African innovators. Working together, we can make exciting progress in securing Africa’s status as a leader in the tech and innovation landscape.”

## Winners

The winners at what has been dubbed the ‘Oscars of the Startup World’ were:

- **Startup Of the Year:** Turbine.AI (Hungary)
- **Best Newcomer:** EVA Vision (Hungary)
- **Founder of the Year:** Sopheakmonkol Sok (Cambodia)
- **Investor of the Year:** Speedinvest (Austria)
- **Best Coworking Space:** ASPACE (Philippines)
- **Best Accelerator or Incubator:** AIS The StartUp (Thailand)
- **Global #Futureshaper by Cathay for Ecosystem Players:** Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Center - MaGIC (Malaysia)
- **Global #Futureshaper by Cathay for Startups:** Cellink (Sweden)

McKevin Ayaba, CEO of Setup A Startup – the umbrella company of the Southern Africa Startup Awards, said: “We are so proud to have been able to shine a global light on African talent and at the same time connect players in the region to help

make Africa the success we all believe it can and will be in the coming decades.”

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