

Edmund Wessels, Anatoli Kirigwajjo win 2023 Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation

South Africa's Edmund Wessels and Uganda's Anatoli Kirigwajjo have jointly won the Royal Academy of Engineering's 2023 Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation.



SA's Edmund Wessels and Uganda's Anatoli Kirigwajjo have jointly won the 2023 Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation. Source: Supplied

Wessels wins with FlexiGyn, a battery-powered, portable handheld device that enables gynaecologists to diagnose and treat women's uterine problems without anaesthetic or expensive equipment. It aims to increase women's access to reproductive healthcare, particularly in remote areas.

"My cofounder Chris Meunier and I aim to bring healthcare to a woman's doorstep, precisely when and where they need it. FlexiGyn is portable, intuitive and user-friendly, allowing gynaecologists to offer quality screenings and timely interventions regardless of the patient's location or lack of medical infrastructure. At the same time, it is designed to minimise discomfort," says Wessels.

"We are excited beyond belief to win the Africa Prize and know that this will help to get our name out and find the right partners to complete FlexiGyn's journey."

Yunga, providing security at low cost

Kirigwajjo wins with Yunga, a local digital security network that connects neighbours to each other and police within a 20km radius through a physical device, smartphone app or SMS service, providing security at low cost.

Nearly 1,000 households in 30 communities across central Uganda are already on the Yunga network, which has successfully prevented around 130 break-ins and related crimes. The team is aiming to connect 32,000 households across Uganda in the next two years.

“I developed Yunga after losing \$1,300-worth of assets in a break-in, with little chance of the thieves being caught. We hope that with our household networks, communities will become harder targets for criminals. This will ensure safety, which in turn will create the space for economic activities to thrive,” says Kirigwajjo.

He and his co-founders, Kawesa Nasser and Kasoma Fredrick, say that winning the Africa Prize will give their business exposure in new markets across Africa.



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Focus on women-led homes

“It will open the door to additional resources such as investments and stakeholder partnerships. The prize money will allow us to add more than 1,000 households to the Yunga network, with a focus on women-led homes, which are more vulnerable to crime in low-resource settings. This is an invaluable opportunity in our efforts to scale up,” adds Kirigwajjo.

Wessels and Kirigwajjo have each been awarded first prize for the Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation, taking home £25,000 to further develop their products. Four finalists delivered pitches at the awards ceremony in Accra, Ghana, before a panel of judges chose the winners.

The two other finalists, who each receive £10,000, are:

- Revive Kit, Chukwuemeka Eze, Nigeria – An e-mobility service that converts gas-powered three-wheel motorbikes to run on batteries, saving up to 60% on running costs.
- Waga Pawa Pack, Gibson Kawago, Tanzania – A power pack made with recycled laptop batteries to provide reliable and affordable power for electric bikes, power banks, solar lights, businesses and homes.



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One to Watch Prize

In addition to the Africa Prize, the remaining 11 innovators from the 2023 shortlist competed for the One to Watch Prize. They presented their innovations to a live audience who voted for the pitch that showed the most potential for impact.

Tolulope Olukokun was selected as the winner of the Africa Prize's One-to-Watch Award of £5,000. His Olukokun

innovation is an electric cargo bike with a battery-powered fridge to help Nigeria's smallholder farmers get fresh food crops to market.

The profiles and pitch decks of the 15 engineers comprising the 2023 cohort can be viewed [here](#).

The 2024 Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation is now open for entries. Individuals and small teams living and working in sub-Saharan Africa with a scalable engineering innovation to solve a local challenge are invited to enter. The deadline for entries is 25 July 2023 (4pm BST).

For more information, click [here](#).

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