

West African startups listed in top 5 businesses that improve the world

The Vodafone Institute has selected five startups to take part in the first accelerator that focuses on women in the tech sector. Around 280 startups from 62 countries applied for a place in the F-LANE accelerator and five most innovative business models came out on top.



Image source: Gallo/Getty.

The selected companies will take part in a seven-week support programme in Berlin, which includes mentorship, training, networking and financial start-up assistance. Selected startups and social ventures from India, Ghana, Nigeria, the UK and Germany will get the opportunity to receive investments up to 4.5 million euros.

The accelerator programme will start on 4 October and the highlight will be the Demo Day of the five finalists on 21 November 2019 in front of investors and decision-makers from business, media and politics.

Alice Deißner, director of the Vodafone Institute for Society and Communication said, “Prejudices against women in the tech sector are still persistent, and the figures about their disadvantage are alarming. Programmes like F-LANE are needed to put this issue on the agenda and show that there is a variety of outstanding business models and diverse inspiring start-up teams.”

1. Developers in Vogue (Ghana): Developers in Vogue are committed to closing the gender gap in the tech industry. Their focus is on women from Africa, who they reach via their AI-based platform. Developers in Vogue offer training in usually male-dominated technical areas, such as software engineering or programming. The participants are then matched with potential employers through the platform. More than half of the graduates have already accepted job offers from partners such as Microsoft or Vodafone. In addition, Developers in Vogue sees itself primarily as a community of technology-oriented African women who work together to create a better future for all.

2. Together for Her (India): India has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, which Together for Her wants to change with a new data-based platform. Mothers can evaluate visited hospitals according to their “Quality of Care” (QoC) using 9 WHO-based indicators. These ratings are freely accessible to (expectant) mothers who are looking for contact points and want to find out more about their health in general. The hospital ratings are also evaluated after registration on the website, which has so far shown a significant increase in their QoC. In addition, Together for Her offers bundled services to pregnant women to help them monitor prenatal health, which can be offered more cost-effectively due to the economies of scale of the website.

3. Safe & the City (UK): Safe & the City has made it its mission to make cities smarter and safer with an app. To this end, they create personalised navigation algorithms that can help avoid danger zones and find help in emergency situations. This service focuses particularly on women, as sexual harassment is still part of their everyday lives. An extensive analysis of the anonymized data collected is used to suggest safe routes through the city to users. In addition, they also work on-site and train companies that are displayed as secure contact points in the app. Safe & the City already works closely with the Metropolitan Police, the City of London and UN Women UK and plans to expand into other major cities within the next two years.

4. Boost Thyroid (DE): Hashimoto is one of the most common autoimmune diseases. Worldwide, 350 million people are affected, mainly women. However, awareness is extremely low and there are few opportunities for patients looking for information and digital solutions to manage their health. This is where Boost Thyroid comes in. The app supports the diagnosis and offers information about Hashimoto as well as a personalised tracking tool that collects the examination data of the users. This anonymous data is used to support studies by research institutes, the results of which can, in turn, lead to an improved quality of life for patients.

5. Rubi Health (Nigeria): Rubi Health offers psychotherapeutic care in rural hospitals in Nigeria. Their primary target group is (expectant) mothers who are confronted with new anxieties during or after pregnancy and suffer from depression or anxiety. Patients can book therapy hours at affordable prices, which take place via video chat in rooms provided by the hospitals. In this way, therapists can be connected from anywhere and the shortage of medical personnel can be overcome on site. In addition, Rubi Health organizes regular “health camps” where thousands of women can have their mental health examined for the first time.

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