

2011 Africa Awards for Entrepreneurship names finalists

Legatum, a private international investment group and Omidyar Network, a philanthropic investment firm, has today announced the ten finalists of the 2011 Africa Awards for Entrepreneurship. The awards recognises and rewards African business leaders who embody the entrepreneurial spirit and demonstrate the qualities required to succeed in business.



The finalists underscore the diversity of entrepreneurs in the competition, representing eight countries including Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The top ten, which includes three woman-owned businesses, work in a range of industries, from software to entertainment to agribusiness.

A record 3 300 companies from 48 African countries submitted entries to compete for the grand prize of US\$100 000, five additional prizes of US\$50 000 each, and a new US\$50 000 award for the Coca-Cola Prize for an Outstanding Woman Entrepreneur.

"The Africa Awards celebrates the standards of business excellence within Africa, helping to build a strong network of African entrepreneurs, and our 10 finalists demonstrate the breadth and depth of entrepreneurial talent across the continent today," said Alan McCormick, managing director of Legatum. "Such diversity shows that Africa's outstanding business leaders are not constrained by geography, gender or ambition."

2011 Africa Awards for Entrepreneurship finalists are:

- soleRebels, Ethiopia
- Unique Solutions, Gambia
- InvesteQ, Kenya
- Expand Technology, Mauritius
- Chocolate City Group, Nigeria
- FASMicro, Nigeria
- Pepperoni Foods, Nigeria
- Cellular Systems International, Senegal
- Victoria Seeds, Uganda
- Securico, Zimbabwe

The finalists will present to an international jury of business leaders chaired by Malik Fal, managing director of Endeavor. The jury will also include some of Africa's most prominent entrepreneurs and investors, including Kamal Budhabhatti, CEO of Craft Silicon and winner of the 2010 Africa Awards; James Manyika, director of the McKinsey Global Institute; and Ayisi Makitiani, CEO of Fanisi Capital.

"Omidyar Network and Legatum share the belief that entrepreneurship is a driving force for positive social impact in Africa," said Matt Bannick, managing partner of Omidyar Network. "The caliber, talent and diversity of the final ten reflect the tremendous potential for business leaders to innovate, inspire, and create change from within the continent."

Convergence Africa

A one-day conference for entrepreneurs and investors will precede the Africa Awards Gala. [Convergence Africa](#) will be headlined by Sir Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group; Tony O. Elumelu MFR, former group CEO of United Bank for Africa, and chairman of Heirs Holdings Group; and Fred Swaniker, founder of the African Leadership Academy. Convergence Africa will take place on 8 December 2011 at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre in Nairobi.

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