



Tech start-up Impact Stories 2021

FastTrackTech Africa and
the Netherlands Trust Fund



International
Trade
Centre

Tech start-up Impact Stories 2021

The International Trade Centre's Tech Sector Development team works closely with Tech Hubs and entrepreneurs to develop local tech ecosystems in ten Sub African countries. Across the countries, we support tech start-ups selected through an open call for applications and categorized by level of maturity. We are also supporting the internationalisation of IT & BPO companies by guiding them in the design of their Export Marketing Plans and targeting new export markets and in the upgrading of their business plans to get them export ready. This brochure contains stories of eleven tech start-ups that are part of our Netherlands Trust Fund or #FastTrackTech Africa programmes. The stories highlight not only the tech start-ups way to success but also the impact they have on their societies.

The Netherlands Trust Fund

The Netherlands Trust Fund IV Tech aimed to enhance export competitiveness in Senegal and Uganda in the IT and ITES sector through an integrated approach to sector competitiveness. The four-year programme ended in June 2021. NTF V is, similarly to NTF IV, based on a partnership agreement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands and the International Trade Centre and runs from July 2021 till June 2025. Its ambition is to contribute to rebuilding back better in the targeted countries with a focus on MSMEs in the digital technologies and agribusiness sectors, linking up both for synergies and business opportunities. The programme covers both sectors in Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, and the digital technologies sector in Ivory Coast, Benin, Mali and Uganda. In the digital technology sector, activities will focus on more business-friendly tech ecosystems, in particular strengthening support organizations such as tech hubs, equipping tech start-ups and MSMEs with resilient business models, linking them to business and investment opportunities and digitalization of traditional MSMEs.

FastTrackTech Africa

The project aims to support digital entrepreneurs and tech start-ups in sub-Saharan Africa with online and onsite training, advisory and coaching focused on building digital and business skills as well as domestic, regional & international business generation and investment promotion. The project also engages with the business support organisations and government to foster local tech ecosystems. The project operates in the seven following tech ecosystems: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Mali, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia. The project benefits leading tech hubs, tech start-ups and digital entrepreneurs. The project started as a 2-year engagement in 2019, and is continuing in 2022.

FastTrackTech Africa Funders



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FastTrackTech Africa

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Mali’s first health tech platform for women offers critical access to gynecological information

DENKO, MALI

After one of her cousins and her twin infants died in childbirth because of the lack of prenatal information, Fatoumata Bocoum Koita began researching pregnant women’s health care in Mali. She found more than half of all pregnant women were not aware of, or did not have access to, proper pre- and post-natal care. Bocoum’s solution was to create the app Denko Kunafoni, Mali’s first health-tech platform catering to girls, women and new mothers. Available in French as well as local languages, it allows users to get gynecological or pregnancy-related advice as well as receive regular medical and vaccination reminders and understand if their situation is urgent or not. “We save lives,” said Bocoum. Her business model is based on subscriptions and advertising by pharmaceutical companies, nutrition products and so on.



59% of 3.8 million pregnancies are without maternal health care yearly
15 405 app downloads in 2020



We save lives.

**Fatoumata Bocoum Koita,
CEO Denko**

Fatoumata said #FastTrackTech helped develop the model by offering business mentoring and networking opportunities. Denko has three staff doctors available to answer questions, and 150 doctors on its database available for appointments. Aware that not all women have access to the Internet, Denko Kunafoni is also on USSD for web and mobile. More than 15,000 women have downloaded the app. Kamissa Diakite, an ethics and compliance officer with a mobile phone company, says the platform “helps women like me who work long hours and don’t always have time to see a doctor during office hours. It is even more important for young girls who may be too shy to speak to their parents to get important gynecological information, which can help prevent unwanted pregnancies.”

DENKO, Mali, denkokunafoni.com

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Digital marketplace led by former refugee helps youth to stay and work in Ethiopia

TASKMOBY ETHIOPIA

Taskmoby was started in early 2019 when founder Ezana Raswork realized that 70% of technical school graduates were unemployed or underemployed, while hundreds of individuals and businesses were looking for reliable and qualified service providers. Taskmoby is a digital marketplace connecting the two. The platform screens all service candidates, their criminal records, ID documents and financial guarantors, before including them on the app network to find contracts. #FastTrackTech supported Taskmoby in networking online and at conferences, and operations development. “One of our target areas is cleaning services, where we work mainly with women. This helps support them and their families, so they don’t feel they have to go leave the country to get a job,” says Taskmoby lead Yonas Abeje, who knows what it’s like to leave home.

1 200  **service providers**
average age 28, 47% women



They don't feel they have to go and leave the country to get a job.

Yonas Abeje, Founder of Taskmoby

Abeje was born in a refugee camp in Kenya before his family was granted asylum in Norway, where he grew up. Now 25, he is proud to have returned to his family home of Ethiopia. For 19-year-old Meseret Kebede, using Taskmoby has allowed her to financially support her older sister, who cannot work, while staying close to her family. “I was in the process of moving to the Middle East for a job when a friend told me that I could make as much money in Ethiopia with Taskmoby,” said Kebede, who now manages a team of eight cleaners and interfaces with customers. For Abeje, this is success. “I always wanted to work in an environment where I could make the most impact.”

TASKMOBY, Ethiopia, taskmoby.com

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One-stop shop digital platform helps schools in Zambia automate daily operations, making remote learning easier

MANGWEE ZAMBIA

Although required by the Zambian government to have automated records management, the majority of schools in Zambia do not as yet have these systems in place. “Doing things manually has become a hindrance for most learning institutions, and we help them bridge that gap and improve their operations,” said Inonge Imasiku, founder of Mangwee in Zambia, a payment platform and data management system. The integrated one-stop shop platform helps learning institutions automate all their processes, including collecting fees, managing school records, and online learning, and seven educational institutions have now signed up to Mangwee. #FastTrackTech assisted Imasiku and her team to strengthen her business model through a series of webinars. “They were instrumental in building up our teams,” Imasiku said.



**Online platform used by
7 educational institutions and
5 000 students**



**What used to take me three days
I can now do in a day.**

Natasha Himoonga, Mangwee user

Natasha Himoonga, student services manager of the distance-learning Keystone University of Africa, which adopted the Mangwee platform in July 2020, says she never wants to go back to manual inputting. “What used to take me 3 days I can now do in a day. Productivity is high,” she said. Life for the students has also become easier. Rather than having to physically visit the campus, they can submit payments, receive study material, hand in work and receive their grades all online, all in real time rather than in weeks. For some rural students, the infrastructure has yet to catch up with the technology: internet connections can be slow or non-existent. “When the infrastructure improves, we will be able to reach many more students in rural areas,” Himoonga said hopefully.

MANGWEE PAYMENTS, Zambia, mymangwee.com

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Benin fintech platform opens up job market opportunities for youth and freelancers

IZICHANGE BENIN

“Online business in Benin has been a challenge because many people do not have access to bank accounts, credit or debit cards. We created Izichange for users to access online banking systems from mobile money accounts,” said co-founder Marius Okouin. The fintech platform enables users to translate local currency into euros or dollars for both personal and business use, and now processes some 2,000 transactions daily. Okouin attributes his platform’s success to a solid financial footing, strong security measures, contracts with payment providers, reasonable fees, and #FastTrackTech support. “They taught us how to pitch to investors, we took part in human resource training, and attended international conferences.” Okouin has also created Izichange partnerships in Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Togo.



2 000 daily transactions
worth 20 000 \$ and 51 000 active users



Thanks to Izichange, we can work online; easily withdraw money; pay our bills; pay our rent.

Saliou Boukary, IT engineer and Forex trader

The platform has opened up the job market, particularly for youth and freelancers working with online businesses and cryptocurrency-based tech jobs. Saliou Boukary, an IT engineer and Forex trader, said the platform had changed the marketplace profile, and created money-making opportunities for many in the 18-30 age range. “Thanks to Izichange, we can work online, easily withdraw money, pay our bills, pay our rent,” said Boukary. “More and more people are interested, and even hackers are switching over to legitimate trading because they can make money,” he said. The key, Boukary said, was Izichange introducing a way for people to easily withdraw their money, which in turn accelerated the development of the sector.

IZICHANGE, Benin, izichange.com

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Edu-tech platform in Rwanda providing crucial resources for teachers and students

O'GENIUS PANDA RWANDA

O'Genius is a Rwandan software startup that develops mobile and web solutions in the area of education, service delivery and other related IT services. In 2017, the company launched O'Genius Panda, an educational platform providing teaching aid tools aimed at making education exciting, interactive and accessible. "We believe if we can change and improve the way students learn, they will be able to improve their lives," said CEO and founder Origene Igiraneza. The platform allows teachers to update their teaching methods and gives students access to crucial learning materials, such as science experiments. According to Igiraneza, more than 75% of secondary schools in Rwanda don't have access to science labs.



11% increase in students' grades
11 000 students & teachers reached
375 schools engaged



They now understand how to use technology in teaching.

Origene Igiraneza, Founder & CEO of O'genius Panda

Frank Kamugume's 13-year-old son, Kamanzi, is one of the students whose school switched to the platform when Rwanda's schools were forced to close during the Covid-19 pandemic. "It helped so much. We were almost four months in lockdown, and he continued his classes, interacted with his teachers and classmates who were also on the system, and developed good digital literacy skills," said Kamugume. In November, after the lockdown was lifted on secondary schools, O'Genius saw 138 teachers sign up within three days. "They were requesting resources and materials, as they now understand how to use technology in teaching," said Igiraneza, who now partners with the Ministry of Education. With #FastTrackTech-sponsored webinars, mentors and advisors, O'Genius last year focused on investment readiness, business models and pricing, and positioning the platform so that anyone can plug in. "It was such amazing learning," said Igiraneza, who adds that he is now tailoring his software for international clients as well.

O'GENIUS PANDA, Rwanda, opanda.xyz/

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Mobile platform in Côte d'Ivoire linking farmers to consumers turns small-scale agriculture into profitable business

ICT4DEV CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Ivorian entrepreneur Jean Delmas Ehui had been working as a tech consultant on agricultural projects when he realized many farmers were losing much of their profit to middlemen when getting their produce to markets. “It just wasn't right that those who were working so hard were making such a small profit,” said Ehui, whose own grandparents had struggled on a rural farm. Some 45% of Côte d'Ivoire's population lives from agriculture. His solution was ICT4Dev, a mobile platform linking farmers to customers. #FastTrackTech helped Ehui build the concept, giving business strategy, development organizational and marketing advice. “We hope to scale up and expand the solution to all West Africa,” Ehui said. Ehui hopes that by bringing more profit to the farming



45% of population live off agriculture
Platform impacted 150 000 persons

community, more youth will see there is a benefit to working in agriculture rather than migrating to urban centers or abroad.



More youth will see there is a benefit to working in agriculture.

Jean Delmas Ehui, CEO ICT4DEV

Farmer Ehouman Moro is part of a 350-farmer cooperative growing mainly fruits, vegetables and cocoa. Prior to using the ICT4Dev platform, farmers faced enormous challenges, ranging from logistics, to agricultural inputs, and real-time market knowledge. “ICT4Dev helped us with advice, training, on-the-ground assistance, online sales and mobile payments,” Moro said. As a result, the volume of sales increased by 40%-50%, farmers’ profits increased, and payments are timely. Being in touch with clients and understanding market-driven sales also has allowed farmers to branch into higher value products, such as ground pepper. “Before we produced just for our family and sold the extra locally, we were amateurs. Now we are learning, and the youth is learning, that this is a business where we can earn more. We are becoming professional.”

ICT4DEV, Côte d'Ivoire, twitter.com/dev_ict4

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Integrated mobile communication and payments platform founded in Tanzania boosts businesses at home and abroad

BEEM TANZANIA

From startups to global enterprises, mobile phone-based platforms have become the universal way to interact and transact with customers across Africa. But communicating and transacting with a widespread audience across different mobile networks can be a challenge, so Taha Jiwaji and his team came up with a solution: a pan-African integrated mobile communication and payments platform. “Beem” offers messaging, USSD, airtime, mobile payment and chatbot services to an array of businesses including banks, retail outlets, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), even church groups. What started out as a way of helping his parents has grown into a high-volume business boosting the communication reach of thousands of entities. “The vast majority

3 000 customers    

1 billion+ transactions

70 000 farmers reached/week

of tech interactions anyone has in Africa is something that was developed abroad. We are trying to change that dynamic, by building everything locally and offering local customers local solutions,” said Jiwaji.



Building everything locally and offering local customers local solutions.

Taha Jiwaji, Founder & CEO of Beem

Godlove Kihupi, responsible for communications and marketing at LEAD Foundation, an non-governmental organization (NGO) that works to improve farmers’ livelihoods through land restoration and reforestation, says Beem allows him to reinforce training by using SMS messages to reach thousands of farmers in villages across central Tanzania. “For us, the SMS system has simplified our communication, saved costs, and has helped to create a “Regreen Revolution” by inspiring and activating local farmers to start greening their lands,” Kihupi said. He plans to expand the system to new projects in neighboring provinces.

BEEM, Tanzania, beem.africa

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Ugandan B2B solar energy cloud platform innovator keeps the lights on in schools and health centres across East Africa

INNOVEX UGANDA

The idea came to Douglas Karugaba Baguma when he was part of a team conducting an energy audit in Uganda’s health centres, and saw that even though they had solar installations, most had broken down due to a lack of maintenance. “Some health workers were delivering babies by candlelight, sometimes there was no hot water,” he recalls. Karugaba, founder and manager of Innovex, decided to fill the gap by creating Remot: a B2B IoT cloud platform linking solar energy suppliers, post-sales maintenance and mobile payments. Remot also has a pay-as-you-go feature that allows end-users to pay over a period of time, making the service more affordable. “Access to



1 000 solar installations
1.2 million people impacted yearly
including 400 schools and 50 health centres

energy is a huge problem in Uganda, and the people who need solar energy most of the time cannot afford it,” Karugaba explained.



Innovex’s impact stretches deep, reaching thousands of people.

**Frank Neil Yiga, CEO of Anuel Energy
an Innovex client**

Innovex now works with some 50 health centres regionally. NTF IV supported with business mentoring, brand awareness training and inviting Karugaba to innovation events. Frank Neil Yiga, CEO of Anuel Energy an Innovex client, who uses Remot in his solar installations, says the platform has had far-reaching effects: it has attracted youth to the tech job sector, saved solar unit installers time and money by allowing remote monitoring and troubleshooting, and kept the lights on for thousands of rural students as well as health centre workers and patients who otherwise would be without electricity. “Innovex’s impact stretches deep, reaching thousands of people,” Yiga said.

INNOVEX, Uganda, innovex.org

The Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) IV is based on a partnership between the International Trade Centre and the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries, and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The initiative in Uganda focuses on tech sector development.



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Digital platform revolutionizes health care record systems in Senegal

E-YONE SENEGAL

“I lost a family member while trying to navigate between health care providers here in Senegal,” recalls Henri Gueye. “We told ourselves we can do more and help save lives,” he added, referring to John Quenum, a health professional and Gueye’s business partner. In 2015, they founded E-YONE, a secure platform that creates and can instantly share digitized medical records for both patients and health professionals, including clinics, hospitals, independent doctors and pharmacies. NTF IV provided vital business management and customer segmentation training, allowing Gueye to begin to scale-up his services when COVID-19 hit and the pandemic ushered in a need for digital health care systems. Gueye understood his E-YONE solution could help Senegal cope with the pandemic and began working with the government and the health sector to successfully track COVID-19 testing and patients.

70 000 patients      

23 medical service providers & 300 health professionals are using the platform



I lost a family member while trying to navigate between health care providers. We told ourselves we can do more and help save lives.

Henri Gueye, Founder of E-YONE

There are now 70,000 patients using the system. His ideas are part of a global revolution in health care where digital services are changing the entire industry. “In the case of dialysis, for example, there are five health records for every patient per visit, and they have treatments weekly - that translates to a lot of paper files which can get lost. The E-YONE platform digitizes all of that,” said Ferdinand Faye, a doctor and public health specialist. “We reduce paper costs and the costs of lost information,” he added. Digitizing records also allows for international coding and in-depth metrics analysis, which in turn can be used for developing national health guidelines, Faye said.

E-YONE, Senegal, eyone.net

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SAFEBODA
safeboda.com/ug
UGANDA
NTF IV Programme

Community-based mobile transportation app transforms Ugandan motorbike-taxi business

SAFEBODA UGANDA

Ricky Rapa Thomson started out as a “boda boda” driver (the local term for motorbike-taxis), then in 2014, with two friends, he launched his own Safeboda taxi business based on the concept of road safety. “I had lost a friend to a boda accident. He died of a brain injury. So my first definition of safety became carrying a second helmet for the passenger,” said Thomson, who prides himself on Safeboda being a community-based African brand built for Africans, that now has more than 20,000 drivers. His mobile app provides safe rides, offers food and shopping deliveries, and various payment options, while his drivers are trained on road safety, first aid, customer service, English language, technology, and financial literacy.



20 000 drivers in Uganda
2 000 in Nigeria



Safeboda has changed the boda-boda community. Pricing is transparent, and drivers are safer.

Moses Musinguzi

NTF IV helped by introducing Thomson and the team to important networking events, such as tech summits in Finland and Rwanda. “This is the best thing that can happen to our entrepreneur eco-system; it creates visibility for us in front of potential partners,” he said. It was visibility of a different kind that got driver Moses Musinguzi a job with Safeboda in 2014. Thomson saw the driver had potential and hired him. “I graduated from high school and didn’t have enough money to continue my education, so I started repairing and driving bikes, then became Safeboda’s first driver. Now I manage 40 people and conduct business data analysis,” said Musinguzi. He says his family now has a higher standard of living, his children are growing up tech-savvy, and the community has benefitted. “Safeboda has changed the boda-boda community; pricing is now transparent, drivers are safer. We are respected now.”

SAFEBODA, Uganda, safeboda.com/ug

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SetTIC
settic.sn
Senegal

NTF IV Programme

Electronic waste recycling center in Senegal becomes business model for country

SETTIC SENEGAL

SetTIC is Senegal's first Environment Ministry-authorized e-waste recycling center working according to international regulations. Environmental engineer and SetTIC co-founder Julie Repetti started the company in 2013 after reading about the dangers of e-waste toxins being incorrectly disposed of by workers in the informal sector. "We wanted to launch something to help," she said. Today SetTIC is recycling up to 70 tons of e-waste a year in Senegal and is expanding into LED lights and ink cartridges. Repetti acknowledges there were many challenges along the way. "We are two women, and this field is very male dominated," she explained. "And for a long time, nobody understood why they should pay to recycle when they could sell to the informal sector. It took a lot of awareness building."

**Yearly recycling of e-waste
in Senegal has grown
from 0 to 50-70 tons**



SetTIC works with 55 clients



It creates jobs for youth, and it benefits the environment. We are looking to involve state agencies and replicate the model.

Amadou Lamine Diagne, Advisor to the Minister of the Environment

NTF IV assisted with business organization and marketing training, and a small financial grant during the COVID-19 pandemic. SetTIC also received support from the Ministry of the Environment through its green jobs promotion framework. Senegal has already introduced legislation to fight plastic waste and is working on laws regarding e-waste. “SetTIC”, says Amadou Lamine Diagne, advisor to the Minister for the Environment, “is a very interesting initiative. It helps break down and recycle e-waste components, it creates jobs for youth, and it benefits the environment. We are looking to involve state agencies and replicate the model,” he said. One important factor, he added, is the removal of international market obstacles so Senegal can more easily re-export recycled components.

SetTIC, Senegal, settic.sn

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