

Solar Turtle takes first prize in Nation Builder Challenge

Pitched by Lungi Tyali, Solar Turtle was recently announced the winner of the inaugural Nation Builder Social Innovation Challenge.



Out of over 180 entries received, the top ten finalists were:

- Department of Coffee – Wongama Baleni
- Indlu – Cobus Truter
- Kuba – Jacques Sibomana
- Mygrow – Theran Knighton-Fitt
- MzansiGo – Pieter Wasserfall
- Real Steel – Jared McIntyre
- Solar Turtle – Lungi Tyali
- TAQA – Qhawe Bula & Tsepang Khoboko
- Vizibiliti Insight – Courtney Bentley
- Vollar – Kyle Ueckermann

“The judges were astounded by how all of these ideas, and particularly the winners, could really make an impact in improving the lives of people in South Africa, while also being financially viable,” said Almero Strauss, one of the judges, and a Mergon director.



Solar Turtle's Lungi Tyali

The winning pitch, Solar Turtle, aims to empower micro-entrepreneurs in rural communities by providing an easy-to-use renewable energy source that provides a place to charge and sell electricity. Solar Turtle provides a solar-powered kiosk in a container that serves as a hub for renewable electricity. During the day, the solar panels are open to collect sunlight and at night they are enclosed and locked securely into the container.

Runners up



Indlu's Cobus Truter

The second place went to Indlu, pitched by Cobus Truter. Indlu is a mobile application aimed at making room rentals easier. With Indlu, tenants can find, pay for and manage their monthly rentals, all with one application. Homeowners can register their rooms, and prospective tenants are then able to bid for the room. Payment occurs via the app directly, or through pay points located at a nearby participating shop. Indlu is an innovative funding method that finances properties for proper upkeep and helps build confidence in low-income areas. The People's Choice award, chosen from an audience sms voting poll, also went to Indlu.



Kuba's Jacques Sibomana

In third place was Kuba, pitched by Jacques Sibomana. Kuba is a business platform that aims to empower small business owners in informal communities. Kuba works to address problems that many small business owners run into, such as lack of administrative and support services, which often prevents the growth of these businesses. Kuba's software platform helps facilitate trading between the formal and informal markets, which includes the entire transaction to ensure a high standard of services and transparency.

Outstanding innovation

"We found the winning idea to be an outstanding innovative self-sustainable business idea that addresses a pressing social issue," said Shawn Theunissen, an executive and the head of CSR at Growthpoint Properties. "We were so impressed with the quality of all the ideas that we created a new category on the spot, and all the judges committed to contributing an amount from their own pockets, which will be matched by LaunchLab," he added. The judges' choice award went to Department of Coffee, pitched by Wongama Baleni.

Based out of Khayelitsha, The Department of Coffee is bringing the high-end coffee culture to townships. The Department of Coffee plans to grow the economy in townships through their coffee sales. The Department of Coffee also plans to expand through other commercial franchises and offer support to township-based coffee shops.

"We were so inspired by the creativity and passion of the top ten entrepreneurs, who are building and scaling sustainable businesses to have a real social impact in our nation. We are delighted that all the pitches were of such high quality that the

judges spontaneously added a new category,” said Keri-Leigh Mac Donald, executive director of Nation Builder. “We look forward to having Solar Turtle speak at our In Good Company Conference in August.”

These three winners will each receive their portion of R150,000 seed capital, as well as business incubation support from LaunchLab.

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