

Google's 'Africa Connected' Finalists announced

*\$25,000 [271,000 rand] prizes for five winners whose lives are 'powered by the web'
Online voting for the winners now open*

Johannesburg, 19 February 2014 - Google has today announced the finalists of the [Africa Connected competition](#). The competition was launched in August last year, calling entrepreneurs, creatives, innovators and web-lovers to share stories of how the web has transformed their lives and work. The 10 finalists have been selected by a panel of judges from over 2,200 entries from 35 countries.

Five successful winners from among the finalists will now be selected by the online voting public. The winners will bag \$25,000 [ZAR 271,000] each, and will also have the opportunity to work with a Google sponsor over a six-month period to further their online business success. The competition categories included Education; Entertainment/Arts/Sports; Technology; Community and NGOs; and Small Businesses.

"Africa Connected is a competition that has run for over six months and we are thrilled at the number of amazing stories that have been collected from across Africa. Today we are excited to announce the top 10 finalists who have been selected by our judges' panel. The diversity of their ventures - from providing clean drinking water to preserving culture - shows how the web can truly drive positive change in the lives of many people and their communities. We look forward to seeing who the voting public choose as the winners - the top five most inspiring success stories from across our continent." says Affiong Osuchukwu, Google Lead for the Africa Connected initiative.

The ten finalists, in random order, include:

- [Steve Kyenze](#), Kenya, [Uweza Slum Gallery](#) (<http://www.uwezakenya.org>)
 - Steve uses Google Search to inspire underprivileged kids through art and helps to improve their skills, so that they can sell their artwork to support their schooling.
- [Sitawa Wafula](#), Kenya, [My Mind. My Funk](#) (<http://sitawa.blogspot.com>)
 - Sitawa is an influential blogger on mental health in East Africa, who has used Google Blogger to establish her award winning blog, which is a reference point for people looking for support and information.
- [Eunice Namirembe](#), Uganda, [The Medical Concierge Group](#) (<http://tmcg.co.ug/>)
 - Eunice has built a 24-hour accessible ambulance call centre to improve access to health care services, by using the Google API dashboard and Google Maps to record patient information and track patient locations.
- [Lamine Mbenque](#), Senegal, [SenegalTV](#) (<http://senegaltvcommunication.simplesite.com/>)
 - Lamine believes in taking African culture to the rest of the world, and that the Internet is the lifeblood to support his mission. YouTube and AdSense has helped SenegalTV share their unique content around the world while enabling him to employ others.
- [Timothy Maguire](#), South Africa, [Grace Communion International](#) (<http://www.gci.org.za>)
 - English-speaking Timothy uses Google Translate while providing humanitarian relief in Portuguese speaking northern Mozambique, so that he can communicate

with project members building water purification plants. He also uses Google Search and Google Maps which assists with projects in remote locations.

- **Nqobizitha Mliilo**, Zimbabwe, **Nafuna TV** (<http://nafuna.tv>)
 - Nqobizitha uses YouTube to post all his new animation and HD video content on his channel to reach a wide audience. He is self-taught, based on information found with Google Search. He is now able to give people in his home country and beyond an alternative form of entertainment not found on traditional channels.
- **Christopher Panford**, Ghana, Technol Services
 - Christopher uses Google Maps in his vehicle tracking devices to record the location of their vehicles at any point in time. This gives local banks the confidence to provide loans to drivers, thus providing them with a means to earn a living.
- **Eric Obuh**, Nigeria, **Vocal Slender** (<http://vocalslender.net/>)
 - Eric is a musician who used YouTube to distribute his content and Google+ to interact with his fans. His music and online popularity have led him to become earn a living from concerts and appearances. He uses his earnings to raise awareness about underprivileged youngsters in the slums of Lagos where he comes from, thereby providing financial aid for the scholars and encouraging school attendance.
- **Eseoghene Odiete**, Nigeria, **Hesey Designs** (<http://www.heseydesigns.com/>)
 - Eseoghene used Google Products to promote her brand as a young entrepreneur, creating international awareness for her fashion label Hesey Designs. She now runs workshops to train other women how to generate an income from designing fashion accessories.
- **Mayowa Adegbile**, Nigeria, **Ashake Foundation** (<http://www.ashakefoundation.wordpress.com>)
 - Mayowa initially used YouTube to post an appeal in order to raise funds for her initiative, a business school for widowed mothers, giving them the tools to make a living and support their families. Because of the getting online she is helping to change lives and give the people who need it a second chance in life.

Anyone who would like to vote for the 5 winners, in whose lives the web and Google have played a pivotal role, can do so on the Africa Connected website: www.africaconnected.com. The winners will be announced on 1st April at an event in Nairobi, Kenya.

The partner judges for Africa Connected, who selected the ten finalists, include:

- Adiel A. Akplogan, CEO, African Network Information Centre (AfriNIC), Mauritius
- Nardos Bekele Thomas, Resident Coordinator, United Nations Development Program, Kenya
- Dr. Towela Nyirenda Jere, Programmes Manager, NEPAD e-Africa Programme, New Partnerships for African Development (NEPAD), South Africa
- Temilola Balogun, Radio personality, fashion photographer and artist, Cool FM, Nigeria
- Adv. Leslie Sedibe, CEO, Proudly South African, South Africa
- Wallace Kantai, Editor, NTV, Nation Media Group, Kenya
- Franklin Leonard, Founder, The Black List, USA
- MI Abaga, Artist and UN Ambassador, Chocolate City Music, Nigeria
- Ory Okolloh, Director of Investments, Omidyar Network, South Africa
- Doha Marzouk, Head, Marketing, Sub-Saharan Africa, Google, Egypt

For more information about the Africa Connected contest, visit www.africaconnected.com
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