

press release

For Immediate Release

Start-ups awarded KES 5M as the Women in Tech Incubator program celebrates women entrepreneurs

Nairobi, 11th April 2018- Five women-led start-ups were last night awarded Kes 1 million each in seed funding to commence commercialization of their business ideas. The five start-ups, Africa Solutions, Maziwa Plus, HeriOnline, Zydii and Bismart, were declared the winners of the six month Standard Chartered Women in Tech Incubator program. The program which is a partnership with iBizAfrica of Strathmore University, was launched to build the capacity of female-led start-ups using technology to tackle problems afflicting the community.

Apart from the seed funding, the start-ups will be given membership to the Kenya Women In Technology fellowship program and alumni network. The five winners were selected from a shortlist of 10 start-ups which included Nekkta, Avopower, ZOA, Beta Art and Catapult Studios.

The 10 finalists went through a 12 week incubation at @iBizAfrica, Strathmore University's leading tech incubator that included mentorship; coaching by top business leaders, technology and legal professionals; immersive world-class entrepreneurship curriculum; networking and exposure opportunities to expand their business networks. The Sh20 million program targeting women-led start up attracted 187 applications from the general public, schools, colleges and universities in Kenya.

Speaking during the Awards ceremony, Mr. Jerome Ochieng Principal Secretary Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), noted that despite the government embarking on an aggressive drive to expand infrastructure women were still under-represented in the ICT sector. "While the issues of affordability and access have been adequately addressed, the most pressing matter today is the run-away gender digital divide. We are convinced that through public-private sector partnerships the gender gap in the ICT field will be adequately bridged. With some enhanced facilitation by way of mentorship and favourable access to capital, we shall soon see women dominating the ICT space in Africa," said Mr. Ochieng.

Standard Chartered CEO, Lamin Manjang, lauded the winners noting that the Bank will expand the programme to ensure that it contributes significantly to employment creation efforts in the country. "The Women in Technology Incubator will go a long way in breaking down barriers limiting women from realising their full potential particularly within the field of Science, Technology and Entrepreneurship. It is our hope that this investment will see top female-led start-ups transform into viable businesses and create more job opportunities for our youth," said Mr. Manjang.

The Women In Tech incubator program was launched in Kenya last year. It is designed for women entrepreneurs and business owners who want to use technology to grow their business but lack the requisite support. The launch of the programme in Kenya follows a successful rollout of a similar initiative in USA by Standard Chartered. The Bank first launched the programme to support women in technology in 2014 at the City College of New York where it created the Women Entrepreneurs Resource Centre.

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