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Young Mozambicans create innovative technological solutions to promote the use of and access to financial services in SADC

Creating innovative technological solutions to promote the use of and access to financial services in the Southern African region is a key challenge that unites young people from the member countries of the SADC region. To address this challenge the SADC Innovation Challenge was launched in February 2020 by FinMark Trust (FMT) to support the design of innovative technological solutions that promote the use of and access to financial services in the region. A series of events were undertaken from initial physical events, and later virtual bootcamps and training webinars, guided by key thematic challenges (financing for SMEs, women and savings, digital financial identity, and access to basic services).

In Mozambique, the Financial Sector Deepening Mozambique (FSDMoç) and ideaLab implemented the Innovation Challenge at national level, and have been driving the objectives and the training of participants – all to bring meaningful solutions to market. FSDMoç has been supporting various initiatives in the field of innovation for many years and were the forerunners to embrace this regional Innovation Challenge, especially as the themes brought up for the competition reflect the country's biggest challenges, and FSDMoç see infinite potential in the solutions our young entrepreneurial players can bring to market. The implementation of these ideas can contribute greatly to mitigate social problems that affect a large part of the populations of the region.

Our entrepreneurs

In Mozambique, 29 entrepreneurs were selected and, through different training and mentoring actions, using digital platforms, had the opportunity to improve their business models. Through support by ideaLab the young entrepreneurs received intensive training in areas including the identification of suitable business models, as well as the creation of prototypes and analysis of the financial viability of their startups.

Manuel Rego, Action Catalyst at ideiaLab, stepped up to the Innovation Challenge by ensuring there was a strong focus on the implementation of the Challenge, and the subsequent insertion of these young innovators in the business environment. Because the world is experiencing an 'atypical' period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he states that *“Throughout the bootcamp and in all accompaniment to young people, ideiaLab made participants aware of the impact of this pandemic on the market where they will be inserted, and the importance of adapting to the new trends that reality imposes”*. Rego's statement focuses on the principle that ideiaLab has adopted to give strength to the ability of entrepreneurs, with a view to being attentive to different adversities, reinventing themselves whenever necessary, and looking for proactive strategies.

Tauanda Chare, founder of MobileCare Insurance (one of the participating entrepreneurs), expected the Innovation Challenge to train and guide him in order to bring a series of benefits for society, with reduced cost service through insurance. To this end, he hopes to win the competition to assert his intentions. *“My next call is to Africa, as we have created the solution for all African markets, reducing inequality in access to insurance services, guaranteeing digital funeral administration services, and reducing debt induced by death in African families”* concluded Tauanda .

Like Tauanda, Joaquim Júnior also looks forward to bringing great contributions to Africa - providing information to any and all interested parties about the places with agricultural products available for sale. With this service, Joaquim maintains that there will be an increase in the income of agricultural producers, a reduction and possibly eradication of losses due to the lack of a market, and finally, the appreciation of the hard work of agricultural workers. As a participant in the challenge, Joaquim believes he has a unique and transforming experience, and more than only advancing in the competition, he is focused on implementing all the lessons he has gained through the bootcamp, and emphasises that whether he wins or not, this is not the end for his solution and business.

National Final

We are very excited to be at one of the highest points of The Innovation Challenge, with the national final to be held on 5th June. It is the first time that an event such as this is 100% digital, due to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. On Friday four entrepreneurs will be highlighted by the challenge jury, among those pre-selected, who will have the honor of representing the country in the grand finale of this competition, which will feature six more countries in the region: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia.

We have been very privileged to take the Innovation Challenge through to the country finals and regional grand finale in an online or virtual environment. COVID-19 has made the drive for solutions that impact and better the lives of people in our countries all the more important in the need for relevance and to be applicable to our ‘new’ environment” states Robert Jones, a Financial Inclusion Specialist at FinMark Trust, who has driven the in-country competitions and the move to a virtual environment. With its focus squarely on driving innovation in the SADC region, FMT

believes partnerships with our FSD Network and hubs such as ideiaLab have been pivotal to generating the momentum and impact that is needed to change the face of financial inclusion over the next few years.

It is particularly exciting now to note that winners from the countries involved will receive cash prizes, support for incubation needed for further development, marketing, and operational development, as well as sponsorship to participate in the regional grand finale. Follow #SADCInnovation Challenge on Twitter to see who the winners are.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About FSDMoç

The Financial Sector Deeping Moçambique (FSDMoç), a program funded by DFID-UK Department for International Development and The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, is a facility for financial sector development with focus on expanding levels of inclusion. We direct our investments and insights to address constraints in the financial market, helping the diversification of Mozambique's economy and bringing prosperity and economic resilience to Mozambique's people. At the core of our strategy, are women, youth and rural low-income population, as well as small businesses that lack access to appropriate and accessible financial services.

About FinMark Trust (FMT)

FinMark Trust is an independent non-profit trust whose purpose is 'Making financial markets work for the poor, by promoting financial inclusion and regional financial integration'. We pursue our core objective of making financial markets work for the poor through two principle pro-programmes. The first is through the creation and analysis of financial services consumer data to provide in depth insights on both served and unserved consumers across the developing world. The second is through systematic financial sector inclusion and deepening programs to over-come regulatory, supplier and other market level barriers hampering the effective provision of services. Together, these programmes unlock financial inclusion and sector development through a symbiotic relationship between rigorous data collection and research activities. Our work can be found in South Africa, throughout the SADC region and the global arena.

About insight2impact (i2i)

The insight2impact resource centre aims to catalyse the provision and use of data by private-sector and public-sector actors to improve financial inclusion through evidence-based, data-driven policies and client-centric product design. It is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation.

Contact:

For communications queries:

FSDMoç – Denise Alves: denise_alves@fsdmoc.com +258 848484001

IdeiaLab – Danial Valigy: daniel.valigy@ideialab.biz +258 841184784

FMT – Dumisani Dube: dumisani@finmark.org.za +27 11 315 9197